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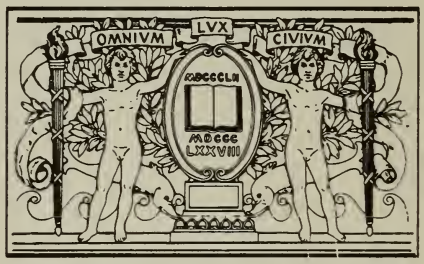

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HIS EVIL EYE;

OR,

SYBIL'S TRIALS.

BY

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HIS EVIL EYE.

CHAPTER I.

THE DISASTER.

THE steamer *Nehawmet*, despite the dense fog, was making ten knots an hour through Long Island Sound.

Captain Walters, brave, thorough old sea-dog, stood on the bridge, trying vainly to peer through the ever-thickening haze ahead of him.

The whistle just back of him gave vent to a prolonged, dismal blast at the end of every minute registered on the engine-room clock.

The side lights, green and red, on either paddle-box, were barely visible to the captain when he turned to look at them. Two pale, vague spots, and nothing more. From a point twelve feet further forward, they were invisible.

A fine, soft rain began to drizzle down.

"The fog will hold all night, at this rate," the captain communed nervously with himself. "Confound the agents and their orders! I'm not bound to follow them. In the face of a fog like this I've no right to make more than four knots an hour, and when it comes to a matter of right, I ought to make for the nearest little harbor and drop anchor."

The shade of anxiety on the captain's face deepened.

Several times he took an irresolute step or two toward the pilot-house, wanting with all his heart to give orders for slackening speed, and yet not quite persuading himself that it was yet altogether necessary.

"Oh, for the fog to lift, on this night of all nights!" he sighed, and into that sigh his whole heart and soul went, for Walters could not rid himself of the conviction that he was risking the lives of all on board.

And yet, what could he do?

The agents of a line are not supreme when a steamer is under way; the captain is.

Nevertheless, the agents can find fault, and often do, when a captain knows that he has done all for the best.

The *Nehawmet* was one of the twin boats of a new line.

Financial troubles at the New York end made it absolutely necessary that the agents there should have a certain sum in cash, amounting to many thousands, on the following morning.

The money in the purser's safe was guarded by two trustworthy clerks sent on with it from the other end of the line. And the captain's orders had been:

"See that the money reaches New York to-morrow morning at all hazards. If you fail in this we may be ruined, and our boats attached."

Those were strong orders, and imperative reasons.

If he failed in his trust to the company, Walters knew the temper of the agent well enough to feel sure that his position was gone, even if the company survived its embarrassments, and a captain's berth at good pay was not to be obtained every day.

And yet it was not the fear of removal so much as

the fear of ruining the company that made Walters take such desperate chances.

And that they were desperate chances none knew so well as he. Even the mate, a placid, stolid, cool-headed fellow, who felt that the *Nehawmet* was making too much speed in such a fog, dismissed his faint misgivings by saying to himself:

"I guess it's all right, after all. Old Walters knows his business as well as any captain in these waters. It isn't worth while to worry about it."

And yet, if Mate Matthison had gone to the captain and made the faintest remonstrance, it would have had weight enough to balance Walters' wavering mind, and the *Nehawmet* would have sought a harbor and an anchorage.

But Matthison, with every confidence in his captain, held his peace, and the *Nehawmet* steamed on through the fog at a speed which would bring her into New York in the morning.

The passengers, over two hundred in number, had not yet retired. It was early in the evening, and an orchestra was discoursing spirited music.

With travelers' indifference, they yielded themselves up to the music, and few gave any thought to the possible danger

There was one, however, who was not devoid of apprehension.

Gerald Alden was traveling to the metropolis with his invalid wife and year-old baby daughter under his protection.

The baby was fast asleep in its mother's lap. The mother, weary from the bustle of starting, leaned back

in a comfortably-upholstered chair, with half-closed eyes, enjoying a grateful feeling of restfulness.

"Poor little woman," murmured Alden, leaning tenderly over the back of her chair. "You are tired out, I know. Hadn't you better retire?"

"Not yet, Gerald," she answered. "Wait until the concert is over, and then I shall enjoy a night's rest."

Alden sauntered away from her, and went outside, as he had done two or three times before during the evening, and gazed anxiously at the thick fog which enveloped him on all sides.

"This looks like criminal carelessness," he muttered. "I've a good mind to hunt up the captain and remonstrate against such reckless speed."

A stout young man, wearing a visored cap and long blue ulster with brass buttons, passed close to him.

Alden stepped forward and clutched him by the arm.

"Are you the captain?" he asked.

"Captain Walters is on the bridge, sir. I'm the mate."

"I should like to see the captain," pursued Alden, "and remonstrate with him at the folly of running at such a speed. It seems to me that he is risking all our lives."

The mate might have given an impatient answer, but he didn't. He believed in courtesy at all times.

"There isn't a better captain on the sound, sir, than Captain Walters," he replied. "He won't run us into any risk, you may be sure. The whistle is blowing every minute, which will warn vessels out of our path."

"Are you positive, then, that there isn't any danger?" persisted Alden.

"Positive," answered the mate, taking another turn

across the deck. "Turn in and take a sleep, sir. The *Nehawmet* is in good hands."

Alden returned to the cabin, not altogether satisfied: his wife inquired:

"What worries you, Gerald?"

"Nothing, dear. Why?"

"I fancied you looked uneasy."

"It must be because I am tired, then."

"Tell me, Gerald, is there any danger?"

"None that I know of."

"Then why does the whistle blow so repeatedly?"

"Because the night is foggy. The whistle is to warn other vessels out of our track."

"And yet you say there is no danger."

"The mate told me there was no danger," Alden incautiously admitted.

"Ah, then you have been consulting the officers. Gerald, I can see that you are afraid of accident."

Alden did his best to dissuade her from that belief, but, like the nervous little woman that she was, she refused to be convinced.

"I shall sit up, and keep baby here with me," she declared.

"But, darling, you will tire yourself out, and we have farther to go to-morrow."

"Never mind, Gerald. I know that there is danger, and I shouldn't sleep a wink if I went into the stateroom."

Alden sank into a chair by her side, not feeling altogether sure that he had any right, under the circumstances, to persuade her to retire.

And the *Nehawmet* kept on, Captain Walters swaying between two opposing duties until he was covered

by a cold sweat as damp and depressing as the fog which enveloped him and his trust.

The whistle was still blowing at regular intervals, and, when it was not sounding the captain leaned eagerly forward to catch any other sound that might come to his ear.

Of a sudden he heard a tinkling sound ahead.

And then came the mate's hail, in slow, measured tones:

"Bell ahead, sir; two points on the port bow."

Captain Walters seized the end of the tube connecting with the pilot-house.

"There's some craft almost dead ahead; slacken speed," he ordered.

A warning stroke sounded on the gong in the engine-room, and speed was slackened.

But the *Nehawmet*, under considerable headway, did not at once slow up.

The whistle sounded its warning note once more.

Then the bell on the port bow was heard again.

This time it rang out loud and clear.

The strange craft was almost under the *Nehawmet's* bow.

"Better reverse the engine, sir," Mate Matthison sung out, calmly.

There was, indeed, desperate need to do so.

Walters seized the end of the tube once more, and shouted:

"Reverse the engine! Quick!"

There was a straining and creaking of the paddle-wheels.

But the *Nehawmet* was yet under such headway that she could not be stopped.

Then came a cry through the enveloping haze:

"For God's sake, sheer off to starboard! You're running us down!"

A white, uncertain cloud of canvas loomed up ahead.

The two vessels were approaching each other, bows on, at considerable speed.

Walters seized the tube once more and shouted:

"Hard a-starboard, for the love of heaven!"

The vessels had approached too near.

The *Nehawmet* came to starboard, and the schooner tried to go to port.

But it was too late.

The schooner's masthead light loomed up, and then the green side light came into view.

All had been done that could be done.

Captain Walters realized that the disaster could not be warded off.

He clutched the rail of the bridge, and held on, momentarily like one dazed.

There was a crash and a terrible shock.

The steamer shivered from stem to stern and careened a little, but immediately righted.

And the schooner, after the collision, slowly receded through the water.

A wail went up from the people on the *Nehawmet*, and oaths were heard from the deck of the schooner.

Captain Walters jumped down from the bridge and quickly ascertained the damage to the steamer.

Then he hailed the other craft:

"Schooner ahoy!"

"Steamer ahoy!"

"Are you injured?"

"Sinking, I reck'n. And you?"

"Sinking, too, I fear," responded Walters, with a similar feeling at his heart.

And then he hailed the schooner once more:

"Are you going to take to your boats?"

"Reck'n we'll have to."

"Then, if you've any room to spare in your boats, come to our relief. I'm crowded with passengers."

"Aye, aye, I'll stand by you, steamer," came in hearty tones from the schooner.

All the passengers of the ill-fated *Nehawmet* had rushed onto the deck by this time.

Many, on leaving their staterooms, had added nothing to their night-clothes, and now, though shivering in the damp night air, none of them possessed the courage to return for warmer apparel.

The crew of the *Nehawmet*, in obedience to the mate's quiet instructions, had taken their posts at the boats.

And now, when the passengers heard Captain Walters' appeal to the schooner, they became frenzied.

Women fainted, and many a man turned pale and trembled at the knees.

Walters now took command of the deck.

"Stand by to lower the boats," he shouted.

And then:

"Lower away!"

"The boats! the boats! our only hope!" shouted the crowd of mad, frenzied men, as they rushed to the side of the steamer, fighting and pushing, all scrambling for safety, regardless of the women and children whom they trampled.

"Stand back, for the love of heaven, you'll swamp the boats, and no one will be saved," shouted Walters, hoarsely.

Gerald Alden, with his wife and infant, had been among the first to gain the deck.

He now stood supporting the pale, gasping little woman, with his arm thrown protectively around her waist.

Vainly he was trying to assure her that the danger was slight, and that the officers of the steamer could save them all.

But, when he heard the captain's appeal to the crowd to stand back, Gerald Alden saw and comprehended the real danger which threatened the maddened crowd.

Seizing his wife in his strong arms, while she, in turn, clasped the infant closer to her breast, he forced his way through the struggling crowd.

Placing the little woman where she could lean against the rail for support, he turned and faced the crowd.

"Stand back!" he cried. "The first man who advances dies."

The foremost of the pushing men started back aghast when they saw the gleam of a pistol barrel in the right hand of the young man.

There was so much of calm determination in his manner that, for the moment, they were awed into obedience.

Possible death from drowning stared them in the face, but they knew that it was certain destruction to press against him who held the pistol so steadily before him.

The veteran Walters, realizing that he had a determined ally at his side, took fresh courage.

One man who crowded too near the captain was promptly knocked down by that worthy, and this culmination of defence stayed the wild rush for a few moments.

The boats were now in the water, and several of the crew took their respective positions at the oars, while Mate Matthison stood by and began to lower women and children into the boats.

Meanwhile the steamer was slowly settling in the water, and it was apparent to all that she must founder in a few minutes.

The second mate, followed by a gang of perspiring sailors, now appeared.

"It's no use to try and work the pumps," he reported in a low voice to the captain. "The water is rushing in, and the pumps can't work."

This dire intelligence was heard and passed from mouth to mouth among the passengers.

Another and greater panic ensued.

"The steamer is going down! She's going down!" cried several of the frenzied male passengers, who had lost all semblance of manhood in the face of their probable fate.

And then the overwhelming desire to get into the boats once more obtained possession of them.

"Rush for the boats, all hands together!" shouted one stout, coarse-visaged man, who seemed the leader of the cowards. "Never mind the fellow with the pistol. If he tries to use it, throw him overboard!"

The cowardly crowd, needing only a leader, rushed forward again at this instigation.

Alden, white but determined, stood his ground.

The coarse-visaged man came foremost.

Crack!

There was a tiny flash, a puff of smoke at the pistol's mouth, and the coarse-visaged man fell back, nursing his wounded arm and cursing.

Alden's determination in firing produced a temporary check.

The crowd stood back once more.

"Don't dare to come forward," shouted Alden. "I shall fire on every man who does."

Then, while the cowardly creatures stood respectfully at bay, Alden turned to the mate and said:

"I'll keep this crowd back, but, for the love of heaven, pass my wife and baby down into the boats."

"Aye, aye, sir," responded Matthison, readily, and turned to do as he had promised.

"Oh, Gerald, Gerald, darling, come with baby and me," sobbed Mrs. Alden.

"Go now, Flora," he said, reassuringly. "I shall come later. I am needed here just now."

She permitted herself to be handed into the boat.

The schooner's boats, by this time, had come upon the scene.

The crowd, terrified into obedience, permitted the women and children first to be handed down. Then the men filed in order to the side of the steamer and took their places in the boats.

The panic had been averted by the coolness of a few determined men, notably of Gerald Alden, and what might have been a terrible catastrophe was, thus far, devoid of a single casualty.

Rapidly the steamer settled now.

Her rail was barely two feet out of the water.

Mate Matthison had just stepped into the last boat.

Captain Walters and Gerald Alden were the only ones left on the steamer's deck.

"Come into this boat," called Matthison.

"No, no," returned Walters, when he saw that the

boat was already crowded low in the water. "No, no, row away. This gentleman and I will get life preservers and swim ashore."

Matthison therefore ordered the boat posted off, and Walters and Gerald Alden ran in search of life preservers.

The boat had gone but a few yards when one of the sailors cried out:

"My God! She's going down!"

All eyes in Matthison's boat were turned upon the steamer.

First her stern plunged down, while her bow shot high into the air. Then the bow rapidly settled, too. The *Nehawmet* sank below the surface of the waters.

"The cap'n and that brave gentleman were on her," cried Matthison. "Row hard, boys, and we'll see if we can pick 'em up."

The boat went rapidly back to the spot where the *Nehawmet* had gone down.

No one could be seen struggling in the water, and to repeated calls there came no answer.

For fifteen minutes, Matthison hoped against hope, and then, with a big tear standing out in either eye, he silently turned the boat's head around and made for the shore.

* * * * * *

The little village of a dozen or more houses on the Connecticut coast proved an hospitable haven for the survivors of the disaster.

Mrs. Alden, sick and almost unconscious, yet with her baby girl clasped tightly to her bosom, was taken to the spacious mansion of the local magnate.

There was, fortunately, a doctor in the place.

He was sent for post haste, and promptly responded.

After hearing some of the details of the disaster, and after making a careful diagnosis of Mrs. Alden's case, he turned to the host and hostess of the house with an ominous shake of the head.

"She has evidently been an invalid for some time," he said, gravely. "I fear this shock will kill her. It is a case which only the Giver of all life can decide. It is beyond my skill."

A few moments later, the sick woman opened her eyes.

"Where is Gerald?" she asked, faintly.

"And who is Gerald?" queried the doctor.

"He is my husband. I fear he is drowned."

"Oh, no, madam, rest assured," the docter responded, reassuringly. "Your husband is safe and sound, and will be with you soon."

She closed her eyes and dozed.

But, in a few moments, she awoke and again called for her husband.

Each time she was given a quieting answer, but gradually it dawned upon her that she was being deceived.

Then she commenced to rave, and her vitality sank.

In the face of her great affliction, and with a constitution already shattered, not even maternal love could keep life in her.

When the morning sun shone into the room it illumined the features of a frail little woman whose spirit had flown.

A tiny baby daughter was left behind; a daughter that must face a life of many dangers and strange vicissitudes.

CHAPTER II.

TWENTY YEARS AFTERWARDS.

"SIBYL! Sibyl!"

"Yes, auntie."

"You must return by five, child."

"Yes, auntie."

The elderly lady upon the broad verandah of the country house disappeared into the interior, while the young lady walked demurely down the long drive, after whistling to two dogs to follow her.

Not a masculine whistle, performed with lips and fingers, but a shrill little blast on a silver whistle, whose tones the dogs seemed to know well, for they came bounding to her from some invisible point in the distance.

There was nothing extraordinary about Sibyl Willoughby, at first glance. The most noticeable points were her beauty, shapeliness and grace.

And yet she differed from the generality of pretty girls, as seen in America.

She was neither of the languishing, hot-house variety, nor yet of the far-away ethereal type.

Her face, her figure, her every movement spoke eloquently of good health; and, better still, of overflowing, buoyant good spirits.

She walked gracefully, with a free elasticity of step, her keen blue eyes roving over the landscape, while the

early September breeze blew her fluffy brown hair about with careless liberty, as she swung her hat in one hand and spoke encouragingly to the dogs as they jumped and scrambled about her.

Sibyl was not posing or exhibiting. She would have scorned to do such a thing.

Indeed, she did not know that she had a spectator, though she had, and an appreciative one, too.

Dr. Willard Massey had taken a short cut across the fields, which had brought him to the edge of the driveway, where he now stood, screened by the shrubbery.

He had been startled by the sudden vision of beauty; an overwhelming diffidence kept him back out of sight.

Young Dr. Massey was not usually troubled with diffidence, either.

But the sudden appearance of Sibyl Willoughby had kept him in the background, where he now stood contemplating her until she had strolled out of sight around a bend in the drive.

"I am very much afraid I shall surrender unconditionally to her, if we both remain in this neighborhood," he mused, following the graceful girlish form with his eyes.

"Sibyl! I like the name, and it becomes her. I don't believe I ever saw health, grace and beauty as well combined before. And the dogs speak volumes for her. A setter and a mastiff—not a pug and a poodle. Willard, my boy, I am afraid you are very much in love, and it is quite certain that you will have a score of rivals in that direction. Good heavens, she may be already married for the matter of that."

With these disquieting reflections the young man

stepped through the hedge and made his way up to the broad verandah of the country mansion.

He was about to ring when he found himself confronted by the elderly lady whom the girl had called "auntie."

There was nothing disquieting or confusing about her.

Dr. Massey doffed his hat with easy deference and inquired:

"This is the home of Judge Willoughby, is it not?"

"It is, sir."

"Then permit me to introduce myself. I am Doctor Massey."

"We expected you, sir, but by a later train. I am Miss Willoughby, the judge's sister, and in his name I assure you that you are heartily welcome. Shall I show you to your room?"

"I infer from the basket in your hand that you have come out here for an hour's rest. If you feel that you can tolerate me, I shall be delighted to remain here with you for the present."

Courtesy and deference in young men to their elders always made a favorable impression upon Miss Willoughby. She took a liking to Doctor Massey at once.

They seated themselves upon adjoining settees and Miss Willoughby took up her knitting, while Willard Massey took up the attack.

He thought of no one but Sibyl, yet he spoke only of the judge.

"My brother did not expect you until five," said Miss Willoughby. "He has ordered the dog-cart to be at the depot for you at that time. He himself has

ridden over to the village. The judge is still fond of the saddle, as I presume you know, Doctor Massey."

"No, I did not know it. This will be the first time that I have ever seen Judge Willoughby at home, you know."

"Yes, my brother is as fond of being on a horse's back as ever, though he is growing old and decidedly portly," pursued Miss Willoughby, knitting industriously, and then added complainingly: "Would you believe it, Doctor Massey, he has had the presumption to ask me to learn to ride. Me!"

Massey thought to himself that it would be a very funny sight, indeed, to see that long, spare, elderly lady taking her first lessons in equestrianism, but you may be sure that he did not say so.

He only said:

"Then I am to infer, Miss Willoughby, that you do not share in the prevailing craze for equestrianism?"

"Nonsense!" she answered, somewhat sharply. "What business has an old woman like me a-top of a horse?"

Massey seldom attempted flattery, so he made no response to this.

They talked indifferently on various topics for the following half hour. Then the sound of flying hoofs was heard down the driveway.

In another moment, the judge came into sight.

"Look at him," said Miss Willoughby. "Doesn't a portly old man like the judge look foolish on a horse?"

"For my part, I think he rides uncommonly well," responded Massey; who, knowing nothing of equestrianism, thought any one a good rider who could keep his seat in the saddle.

"No, he doesn't ride well at all," said Miss Willoughby, sharply, "though I think Sibyl does."

Here was the chance the young man had been waiting for, and he embraced it eagerly.

"And may I inquire who Sibyl is?" he asked.

But, at this moment, the judge gained the verandah, dismounted, and cried out:

"Massey, I am delighted to see you. How are you?"

So the young man had to descend the steps and shake hands with his host, leaving his question about Sibyl unanswered.

One of the stable men came to take the horse, and the young man and his host ascended to the verandah arm-in-arm.

"I presume that you have already introduced yourself to my sister, so I shall dispense with that ceremony," said the judge, seating himself. "And, now, may I ask how you like my place?"

"Very much, indeed, what I have seen of it," answered Massey. "But you know I have never seen it before, and but little of it to-day."

"True," admitted the judge, "but that was because I never met you until the other day. Your father, when a young man, was a frequent and welcome visitor at my home. Not here, though; I lived in Connecticut then. But, now that we know each other, I trust that you will take your late father's place as a frequent guest."

"I shall be delighted to," Massey answered.

"And now," the judge went on, "perhaps you would like to take a walk, to look over the place with me."

Massey had just looked at his watch, and it wanted but twenty minutes of five.

Sibyl would return on the hour at the latest.

He could not then lose the chance of seeing her at the earliest moment.

"If you will pardon me," he answered, "we will put it off till to-morrow. I have had a long journey, and I preferred to walk from the station. The consequence is that I am rather tired."

"Then put it off until to-morrow, by all means," returned the judge, easily. "Perhaps, Massey, you would like to be shown to your room, if that has not already been done."

"Thank you, no. It would seem a shame to pass one's time indoors such glorious weather."

"I am glad you appreciate it," returned the judge. "We almost live out-of-doors here in the autumn."

The fluttering of a white dress in the distance down the driveway caught Massey's eye.

The judge saw it too, for his eye lit with pleasure as he turned to his guest and said:

"Ah, here comes little Sibyl. I am sure you will like her."

Massey was positive on that point, but he strove to conceal his eagerness when he asked:

"And who is she?"

"My daughter," Judge Willoughby responded. "Not my own daughter, however, but she has been under my roof for so long that I look upon her as of my own flesh and blood."

Then, perceiving that he had aroused his guest's curiosity, the judge added:

"It was when I lived in Connecticut, on the shore of Long Island Sound. There was a steamboat disaster. The father perished in trying to save others.

The mother reached shore with the child, but died in the night. Sibyl was the name she called the child by. I adopted the little one, as I never heard from any of her relatives. I don't even know the surname of her real parents."

There was no more time for explanation.

Sibyl approached the steps, and ascended them lightly.

"Sibyl, my darling," said the old man, "this is Doctor Massey. His father was a cherished friend of mine, and I hope to see the friendship extend to the children."

Sibyl gave the stranger one keen look, and then, as if satisfied with the result of her inspection, advanced and held out her hand with an expression of frank pleasure.

Massey felt a thrill pass over him as he took her hand in his, and said quietly:

"I am very glad to see you."

Sibyl seated herself, turned to the judge, and said reproachfully:

"Papa, you took Abdallah to-day, and he is the only animal in the whole stable that I care to ride. So I had to walk."

"I am very sorry," responded the judge, meekly. "It shall not happen again. I did not think you cared to ride to-day."

"I am very fond of riding," said Sibyl, turning to their guest. "Do you ever ride?"

Massey had never been on a horse, and he was nothing if not honest.

But, with those steady blue eyes fixed on his, and

her apparent interest in the question, he yielded to the temptation to tell a falsehood.

"Yes, I am very fond of the saddle," he answered.

It had escaped him, and now he would have given worlds to recall the rash statement.

His conscience rebuked him, and he felt that he had made an inauspicious beginning by telling her a lie.

"Then you might take him for a canter through the country after breakfast to-morrow," suggested the judge.

"If he cares to go I shall be delighted," Sibyl answered.

"It is very good of you," murmured Massey, with seeming gratitude.

"Then it is settled?" she queried.

"Yes, surely, with many thanks," he answered, wondering at the same time how he could escape the threatened exposure.

Then, turning to the judge, he said:

"All of my baggage is down at the station. Can I trouble you to send for it?"

"Certainly," answered Judge Willoughby, and started for the stable to give the order.

"I am glad you did not say 'luggage,'" commented Sibyl, approvingly. "There are a great many intensely English young men about here just now, and their dialect is intensely wearisome."

Massey made a mental note to the effect that affectation and false pretense would serve no good purpose with Sibyl Willoughby.

He greatly regretted his rash assertion about his equestrian proclivities, but it was too late to retreat now.

Dinner was served to only four, and Massey had ample opportunity to converse with and study the young lady who had so attracted him.

But as the young man was never effusive and rarely impetuous, he could not flatter himself that he was making rapid headway.

After dinner, since the evening was not too cool, the verandah was the most comfortable place to pass the time.

Apparently the judge's house was a place of popular resort in the neighborhood, for plenty of people dropped in during the course of the evening.

One young man, who was introduced to Massey, Gilbert Kennison, seemed to feel uncommonly at home.

He made straight for a vacant seat beside Sibyl, and devoted himself to her, almost ignoring her other companion, Massey.

"I am looking forward to a delicious treat to-morrow, Miss Willoughby," said Kennison.

This appeared to be a reminder to Sibyl, who looked guilty and uneasy.

"Mr. Kennison, I owe you a sincere apology. I had forgotten our engagement to ride together to-morrow morning, and had actually made a similar engagement with Doctor Massey. What am I to do?"

"Oh, I will consider my appointment cancelled, if you wish it?" said Kennison, stiffly.

Sibyl turned perplexedly to Massey, who felt a sudden pang at his heart.

He interpreted that look into an appeal.

"I shall be sorry to forfeit the pleasure I had promised myself," he said, "but Mr. Kennison has the right

to previous appointment, and it is I who should release you."

"Thank you, if you will, Doctor Massey, but I have been inexcusably forgetful. Please accept my apology."

"It is of no consequence, since the appointment can easily be made for another time," said Massey, and then wondered if he had not been guilty of awkwardness.

Kennison scowled at the intimation that the other had any claim at all upon Miss Willoughby's time.

The conversation languished for ten minutes. Then Kennison turned to Sibyl with:

"As it is not chilly, shall we take a turn up and down the driveway? I see that others are doing it."

Sibyl, without making any response, rose and slipped her arm through Kennison's, and allowed him to lead her away.

Massey was left to bitter reflections.

"She evidently prefers him," he soliloquized; "and yet, why shouldn't she? Before to-day she never even knew that I was in existence, whereas this Kennison is evidently an old and favored suitor; and I doubt if he is the only one about here who has the good taste to want her. On the whole it is fortunate that I lost that appointment to ride with her to-morrow morning. If I had failed to devise a good excuse I should have been exposed to her merited contempt."

There was one caller who sat by himself in a corner of the verandah, smoking reflectively at a perfumed cigarette.

Calvin Durand was, unquestionably, a handsome man, and really handsome men are rare.

He was tall and well made, with a strongly leonine

face which had in it something of feline stealth and craft.

He, too, had seen Sibyl Willoughby that evening, and, though he had traveled the world over, he felt that he had never seen her peer.

A fierce, frenzied desire to possess her had seized him, and he felt that past experiences had taught him how to win a woman.

"I'll have her," he said to himself, with a calm smile. "Perhaps the two young men with her now are the only rivals at present in the field. I will quickly drive them to a respectful distance, and keep them there. Experience and not sincerity, is needed in winning a woman. Now, for an introduction, and then to prove the truth of my training."

CHAPTER III.

SIBYL'S THREE LOVERS.

CALVIN DURAND watched his opportunity, and, a few minutes later, found a chance for a quiet and solitary interview with Judge Willoughby.

"Your daughter is a singular young woman," he remarked to the judge.

"In what way?" queried the latter.

"She is far out of the run of ordinary women," returned Durand.

"I grant you that," responded the judge.

"She is so different in almost everything," pursued Durand, "that I have persuaded myself that her training has been out of the common. She is better educated, better bred, more intelligent and less conceited than most women."

"Isn't that rather hard on the rest of her sex?" queried Judge Willoughby, with a smile.

"I didn't intend it so," replied Durand, earnestly. "I meant it only as a double compliment to Miss Willoughby's mind and training."

"Thank you," Willoughby said, simply, and then added:

"You see, Mr. Durand, I take your praise of Sibyl as a compliment to myself. The girl's training has been under my supervision from the start. She has

never been away from me, but has studied at home under the best governesses and tutors that I could obtain."

"The result pays the highest compliment to your judgment," said Durand, seriously.

Judge Willoughby appeared highly gratified.

"Have a cigar?" he asked.

Durand took the weed and lighted it.

Under skilful questioning the judge became highly communicative.

At length he launched into an account of Sibyl's life and how she came into his family.

"And since my wife died," the judge wound up, "this child has been all in all to me. It is my wish to keep her with me as long as I live, and, when I die, she will come into nearly all my property."

At this statement Durand became doubly attentive but he betrayed no eagerness.

"By the way," he remarked, after a few moments of thoughtful smoking, "it is strange that in all the times I have called here I have never been presented to Miss Willoughby."

"You haven't?" cried the judge. "Then it has been a singular omission on my part. I hope you don't attribute it to intentional discourtesy."

"Not at all," returned Durand, calmly. "I knew you would do it at any time when I asked you to so honor me."

"To be sure I will," was the ready answer. "Here comes my daughter now, with Mr. Kennison."

"I trust Mr. Kennison won't intrude himself upon me," said Durand, calmly.

"May I ask why?"

"Certainly; I don't consider him desirable."

The judge became interested.

"May I ask if you have any grounds for such a statement?"

"I shouldn't make the statement if I hadn't ample grounds," returned Durand, rather stiffly.

"To be sure, to be sure; I beg your pardon, Durand."

"It is readily granted, Judge; but I hope you won't push this matter any further."

This, however, was a direct challenge to do so, and the judge fell promptly into the trap.

"But, my dear Mr. Durand, don't you see that this is a matter which vitally interests me? Mr. Kennison is a frequent visitor here and is much with Sibyl. If there is any good reason why he shouldn't come here, I ought to know it."

Durand appeared to deliberate for a few moments.

"Will you treat what I have to say as confidential?" he asked.

"Certainly," responded the judge.

"Well, then, sinking his voice to a whisper, "I know positively that the most, if not all, of Kennison's income is derived from a gambling den which he runs in New York."

Judge Willoughby, honest and old-fashioned, started back aghast.

"Are you sure of this?" he gasped.

"Positive," answered Durand, calmly.

"Then I will kick the presumptuous fellow off my grounds."

The indignant judge started to his feet as if to carry

out his threat, but Durand quickly pulled him into his chair again.

"Don't do anything rash, sir. It would be of no avail. I have told you something which I know to be a fact, yet it would be well-nigh impossible for me to prove it to you, or to any one else. Kennison, who belongs to a really good family, and who desires to retain his respectability at all hazards, has covered his tracks so neatly that I doubt if a skillful detective could ever connect him with the place which he runs in New York. He never goes there; the den is managed for him by a man in whom he has every confidence."

"It is horrible," muttered the judge, indignantly. "And to think the fellow has the presumption to show himself here! The worst of it is that the Darlingtons introduced him here."

"I told you," said Durand, calmly, "that the fellow has most excellent connections, and it would be difficult, indeed, to prove what I have said against him. For the matter of that, Judge, you have only my word for it, and I shall not be offended if you decline to credit a story seemingly so absurd."

Judge Willoughby hastily reflected that he had only a statement, unsupported by evidence, and for a moment his mind wavered.

But Calvin Durand was a man whom few ever disbelieved.

He was always quiet and reserved, and though a thorough cynic at heart, he generally professed principles of calm, trustful optimism.

Added to which, he was possessed of a keen, magnetic eye that seemed to bring all whom he approached under his sway.

Judge Willoughby, under the keen, steady gaze of the man opposite him, was not long in coming to the conclusion that Durand, though a comparative stranger, was a man to be trusted and believed.

"I feel that I can believe you, Durand," Judge Willoughby said, quietly.

"And yet," Durand went on, calmly, "I trust, as I said before, that you will do nothing rashly. Remember, I am the only man here who knows the truth about Kennison. Now, before you act blindly on my assertion, let me ask you to do nothing in haste. Do not at once forbid the man your house. Take time to observe the man and make up your mind about him. This is not a desperate case, and nothing can be lost by a little reflection."

Again the judge deliberated.

And again, under the same steady gaze of Durand's eyes, the judge came to the conclusion that he could trust him.

"I will take a little time," he assented.

"Thank you," said Durand, with an air of relief which was genuine enough, but which the judge wrongly interpreted.

Sybil and Kennison had now approached so near that the judge called the girl to him.

"Sybil, my dear, let me make you acquainted with Mr. Durand."

Sybil bowed and offered him her hand.

She had often contemplated Durand from a distance, but she had not been able to make up her mind about him.

While she could not decide whether he was alto-

gether frank and trustworthy by nature, she was at all events interested in him as a puzzle.

Kennison, feeling that he was ignored, sauntered moodily away, and took a seat by himself in a distant part of the verandah.

Judge Willoughby now arose, and walked away to mingle with his visitors.

Sybil sank back in her chair and turned her luminous eyes full upon Durand.

The latter met the gaze calmly.

For some moments they contemplated each other, and the longer it lasted the more Sybil fell under the spell of her companion.

Calvin Durand certainly possessed wonderful eyes. They had the rare magnetic quality of attracting, and often of controlling. Durand was conscious of his power, and had assiduously cultivated it through life. And he had studied kindred art until he felt confident that he could, when so determined, control others and make others do much as he pleased.

Feeling, in a few moments, that Sibyl Willoughby was peculiarly sensitive to hypnoctic influences, he began to talk with her in low, musical tones.

And Sibyl, conscious of a strange interest in her companion, replied now and then in a manner which satisfied Calvin Durand that he was making satisfactory headway.

Gilbert Kennison consumed cigarette after cigarette, at his lonesome post of vigil, with an intense feverishness which betrayed his extreme perturbation of mind.

Kennison had arrived at that stage in his love when he knew not a moment of happiness away from the side of the beloved one.

He chafed and fumed, half smoked his cigarettes and threw them away.

"Confound Durand," he muttered. "His impudence is sublime in imagining that Sibyl likes to stay there and talk with him. Why doesn't she snub him by getting up and leaving him?"

If Kennison had known the real state of affairs, his discomfiture would have been inconceivably greater.

After being alone for half an hour, with thoughts that were not pleasant, the impetuous lover could stand it no longer.

"Here goes to snub the donkey," he muttered, rising and strolling over to where Sibyl and Durand sat.

Raising his hat with careless grace, Kennison inquired:

"Shall we resume our interrupted walk, Miss Willoughby?"

Sibyl looked at him with considerable surprise.

"I do not understand you, Mr. Kennison."

"I inquired, Miss Willoughby, if we shall resume our interrupted walk? The evening seems to be a trifle chilly. Perhaps it would be better if we kept in motion."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Kennison, you are very good to be so anxious about my health, but I am really not afraid of catching cold. I prefer to remain here. Won't you be seated?"

It seemed to Kennison that he, instead of Durand, had been snubbed. However, anything was preferable to leaving a possible rival in possession of the field, so with muttered thanks he sank into a chair near his beloved, with a pretence of unconcern which belied his inward feelings.

Sybil was civil to him, but it was apparent to the

desperate Kennison that, on this occasion at least, she preferred Durand's company to his own.

"But perhaps she is doing this only to try me," he thought, and found a world of comfort in this possible solution.

Human nature is weak, and an impetuous lover is an exaggerated example.

Gilbert Kennison endured his misery as long as he could with outward complaisance, but at last he could bear it no longer.

"I must go now, Miss Willoughby," he said.

"Oh, must you, so soon?" she returned, but there was so much indifference in her tone that the young man's heart ached.

"Yes, I must go. Pray do not forget our appointment in the morning. I will call after breakfast."

"I shall not keep you waiting," Sibyl answered. "Good-night Mr. Kennison."

"Good-night, Miss Willoughby."

He bowed to her. The two men lifted their hats to each other, and Gilbert Kennison strode away.

"Confound that fellow," he muttered savagely to himself. "Of course he is looking after me now, with that calm, ironical smile of his."

But Durand was doing nothing of the sort. He had turned to Sibyl Willoughby, and gravely resumed the conversation which Kennison had interrupted.

A little later Durand took his leave, reflecting:

"After all, I am afraid I went a trifle too far in informing the judge that Kennison is a gambler, However, my little falsehood in that direction will not be discovered. I covered my tracks neatly and the judge is not one to reveal my confidence.

"As to Sibyl, there is no doubt of my success with her. Already she inclines to me, without knowing why. She is a sensitive subject to hypnotism, or whatever that power is which I know I possess. My greatest care must be not to leave her too much to herself, or a revulsion of feeling may set in against me.

"Well, I am playing to luck just now. Have met the only woman I ever thought worth the trouble of winning, and a handsome fortune goes with her. The fortune will certainly not be amiss in the present state of my affairs."

Durand, busily revolving these plans in his brain, walked directly to the commodious summer hotel at which he was stopping.

But he did not go to his own room directly. Instead, he turned down one of the other corridors. He paused before a certain door, and with a latch key opened it.

A woman, still young and handsome, rose to meet him.

"You have not given me much of your time of late, Calvin."

The woman spoke English perfectly, yet did so with a faint French accent that was very pleasing.

Lise d'Armettre was the widow of a French nobleman, and, bearing an excellent reputation, she had found no difficulty in entering society on this side of the water. The source and extent of her income were unknown, but it was noticed that she always appeared well supplied with money.

"You can't expect me to devote myself exclusively to you," returned Durand, rather inaudibly.

"And yet you are supposed to love me devotedly," she urged, reproachfully.

"See here, Lise," he cried, roughly, "you haven't been talking that sort of stuff to others, have you?"

The Frenchwoman drew herself up a trifle haughtily.

"Not I!" she replied. "I know only too well that our love is secret. But I am content while no one else shares it."

"This is nonsense, Lise. I am likely to marry at any time."

"What! You mairee, you?"

Her eyes blazed as she confronted him with this question.

"Yes, my dear Lise, I shall probably marry in a few weeks. It is better that you should know it now, that there may be no misunderstanding later."

"What! You mairee soon, you? Oh, mon Dieu, why you tease me so?"

In the sudden rush of her passions, Madame d'Armettre's fluent control of English left her.

"Come, come, Lise, let us have no nonsense."

"Oh, if you mairee, I will keel you—no! I will denounce you to your wife. I will prevent ze marriage," the unhappy woman cried.

"You will dare to do nothing of the sort, Lise," exclaimed Durand, angrily.

"Oh yes, I will, have no doubt of that!"

Durand seized her by her wrist, and glared into her eyes.

As soon as her eyes met his she began to shrink and cower.

"Oh, Calvin, do not look at me zat way. I will obey. Do you hear? I will obey. Oh, mon Dieu! take your eyes away from me. I will do you no harm; I swear it."

But despite this appeal, Durand continued to gaze into the terrified eyes before him. Gradually they lost expression. The woman seemed to wither and contract, and tremors shook her frame.

At last her eyes closed, a convulsive shudder passed over her, and Durand placed the insensible woman on a sofa.

"She was a fool to think she could disobey me," Durand said to himself. "She dares not and could not if she dared. I shall have no more trouble with her. I can give my whole time to Sibyl."

He gazed at the unconscious Frenchwoman on the sofa, and a sardonic smile hovered in the corners of his mouth.

"She won't come out of that sleep for hours," he muttered.

Durand opened the door and passed out, making it fast behind him.

CHAPTER IV.

DR. MASSEY TAKES A LESSON IN RIDING.

Dr. Massey awoke on the following morning in a very uncomfortable state of mind.

Although he had not yet known Sibyl Willoughby twenty-four hours, he was already hopelessly in love with her. Added to this, his observant eyes had seen enough during the preceding evening to make him feel miserably positive that he could not hope to win in the race for her affections.

Dr. Massey was not a conceited young man.

While he had enough professional self-confidence to be a very clever physician, yet outside of his duties he was burdened with much more modesty than his age calls for in men.

Since he was the only guest, he met only the judge's family at breakfast.

Sibyl, minus hat and gloves, came in, in riding costume.

"My dear, do you think that a becoming dress for the table?" urged the judge, reproachfully.

"Please don't scold, papa," she answered, entreatingly. "Mr. Kennison is sure to be here early, and this is such a glorious morning that I couldn't endure to waste time in dressing again after breakfast."

Sibyl always had her own way when she pleaded with the judge. Had she adopted law and practised it before his bar, Judge Willoughby might soon have lost

his reputation as a fair and impartial distributor of justice.

"Say no more about it, Sibyl," said the judge, weakly. "I am sure I have no objection to your costume, if Doctor Massey has not."

"Why should he object?" queried Sibyl, fixing her eyes first upon the judge, and then, in turn, upon Massey.

The latter felt embarrassed, but managed to reply:

"Any objection on my part, if I had the right to make it, would certainly be in bad taste, and would display a great lack of appreciation. Miss Willoughby looks superb in habit."

"Now you have descended to flattery," she retorted, disdainfully, "and I despise flattery."

"I am not given to that vice," returned Massey, gravely.

Sibyl looked at him an instant with her keen, penetrating glance. Then she said, frankly:

"I believe you, Doctor Massey. I apologize, and I thank you."

"Sibyl, my dear," asked the judge, a little later, "when is Doctor Massey to ride with you?"

"Why, to-morrow morning, I suppose," she answered. "I had already made an appointment with Mr. Kennison for this morning, and Doctor Massey was kind enough to postpone his claim. When shall it be, Doctor?"

Massy, though he groaned internally, managed to preserve a calm and smiling exterior.

"Why, since you were good enough to mention to-morrow morning, let it be then," he answered, "or—or any day that will best suit your convenience."

"To-morrow, then," she answered

"I can take you to-day, Massey, if you care to go," put in the judge. "I have several good nags in the stable."

Massey made no positive reply on this point, but left it to be understood that it could be settled later in the day, resting wholly on Willoughby's convenience.

The clatter of hoofs was heard in the driveway.

"That must be Mr. Kennison," said Sibyl, rising. "I must go now, for I promised not to keep him waiting."

The judge and his guest followed her to the verandah.

Kennison sat firmly on a spirited horse, and it made Massey keenly envious to see how well he controlled the animal.

"I hope the judge's horses are not like that one," mused the doctor, with an inward shiver, at thought of the sorry figure he would cut on such a nervous brute.

A groom appeared, leading Abdallah, saddled for his fair rider.

"I'm afraid I can't dismount, Miss Willoughby, my beast is so unruly this morning," said Kennison. "If I should leave him for a moment he would break and run. Doctor Massey, will you oblige me by assisting Miss Willoughby to mount?"

He didn't know just how it was done, but Willard Massey was too cowardly to betray the fact at that moment.

He advanced, and Sibyl placed her tiny booted foot in his hand, seizing the horns of the saddle at the same time.

"Now!" she cried, making a spring.

Massey managed to accomplish the feat required of him, but he did it rather awkwardly, and Sibyl shot

a keen glance at him that had a little of suspicion in it.

Kennison, whose horse was getting more unruly every moment, was anxious to be off.

"Come back in season for luncheon," urged the judge.

"We'll try to," answered Kennison. They were off, followed at a discreet distance by a groom.

Judge Willoughby turned to his guest.

"I have some business which I must go into the library to attend to," said he; "can you amuse yourself for an hour or two?"

"I will make the effort," answered Massey. "I will go to the stable and look at your horses."

"Do so, by all means. You will find one of my men there, no doubt, who can show them to you to good advantage."

The judge turned into the house, and Massey walked briskly to the stable, rapidly revolving a newly-formed plan in his head.

He went first into the spacious stall-room, and looked the animals over with an eye that was far from critical, inasmuch as he knew nothing of horseflesh.

Hearing a slight noise in the harness-room he stepped to the open door. An Irishman, busily at work polishing a harness, met his eye.

The man was short and stout, with a jolly-looking face, surmounted by a shock of red hair, which dwindled down into thin, sandy whiskers.

A short pipe, stuck firmly between his teeth, sent up rapid puffs in time to the energy with which he rubbed a soft chamois over the silver trimmings of a bridle.

When he saw Massey he paused in his work, and the

puffs of smoke ascended from his pipe at a slower gait, which betokened deliberation.

As Massey made no effort to begin the conversation, the man finally asked:

"Did ye wanter see me, sor?"

"That depends upon who you are."

"Me name, is it? Michael Fay, the coachman, sor, et yer service."

"Then I imagine, Michael, that you must be the man I want to see."

Massey went nearer to him, inserted his hand in a vest pocket, and drew forth a ten dollar bill, which he unfolded, and held before the man's eyes.

"Do you see this, Michael?"

"Av coorse I do, sor. I'm not blind."

"Well, Michael, I want to turn this over to you."

The Irishman, not offering to take the bill, eyed the other shrewdly.

"It's not a prisint yure makin' me of it, sor. What d'ye want for it?"

"I want information, Michael."

"If it's anyt'ing about the family ye wanter know, sor, ye'd better keep yer money. I can't give ye yer money's worth. It's nothing that I can tell ye about 'em, sor, barring that they're mighty dacint people."

Massey was both provoked and amused at his declation.

"Do I look like a man, Michael, who would pump the servant for information about my host?" he asked.

"Indade ye don't, sor. It must be moor honest business than that."

"Well, it is, Michael. What I want to ask you is is about the horses."

"Horses, is it?" cried Fay, jumping to his feet, and accomplishing the transfer of the crisp bill to his own pocket. "Then, sor, you've come to the roight place. What is it ye wanter know, sor?"

"Michael," said Massey, bending over the coachman, and whispering impressively, "I don't know anything at all about horses."

"I belave ye, sor," answered Michael, in a matter of fact way.

"And I want you to post me up," continued Massey. "In especial, I want you to teach me to ride."

"I can do that, sor."

"If possible I would like to have you begin with me this morning. How long will it take you to teach me?"

"That depinds, sor, but we'll go about it this minute, if yer honor likes."

"Yes," Massey assented, eagerly, "at once."

"It'll take but a minute, sor, to get ready."

"Very well, Michael, and remember, not a word about this to any one."

"Mum's the word, sor."

Fay provided Massy with a pair of riding leggings belonging to one of the grooms, and then quickly saddled two horses.

"Which is the gentler animal, Michael," queried Massey.

"Dolly, sor; there's not a quieter cratur in the world."

"Then I'll ride Dolly."

Michael showed his liberal patron how to mount, and how to sit well in the saddle.

"Now, sor, I'll take ye, if ye like, to the field beyond the hill. There's not a sowl like to see us there."

"Then let us go there, by all means," answered Massey, who was beginning to feel a trifle nervous.

"Walk Dolly, sor," directed Michael.

They walked their horses over the field indicated, up over the hill and down into the second field.

Dolly certainly merited all the praise Fay had given her for quietness, for she showed no inclination to break out of the walk.

Then followed a series of instructions in the art of equestrianism. Massey, though he had little confidence in his mounted self, had plenty of that quality known as "grit," and was, moreover, determined to learn.

He did his best to profit by all that was told him, and progressed rapidly in the next two hours.

"You're doin' splendid," said Michael, approvingly.

"Do you think I know enough of riding, now, to go out to-morrow morning with a young lady?"

"Depinds, sor, upon who the young lady is."

"Miss Willoughby, for instance?"

"Lord bless ye, no sor. Miss Willoughby do ride upon Abdallah, sor, an' sometimes, sor, she rides like the wind."

"Then I'm afraid I shall have to invent some excuse and give up the idea," said Massey, disappointedly.

Michael reflected a minute and then his face brightened.

"Whisht, sor, don't be onaisy. I can fix it. I'll manage to pull one of the shoes off of Abdallah, and then to-morrow mornin' I'll tell the young lady that her cratur cast a shoe to-day. Then she'll have to ride a slower horse."

"And then you think I can keep up with her?"

"I t'ink ye can, sor."

"And you don't believe she'll discover what a poor rider I am, do you?"

"Not a bit of it, sor."

And then Michael added, more frankly:

"P'raps ye'd better tell her, sor, that ye haven't been on a horse much of late years. That'll be no lie, yer honor."

Michael now declared that he must return to the stable, and Massey, who felt that he could get along all right on the gentle Dolly, turned the animal into the road, which skirted the field, and "went it alone."

The slow, easy lope of the gentle mare seemed delightful to him, now that he knew he could keep in the saddle.

"This is enchanting," he murmured. "I wonder I never tried it before. I certainly shall hereafter."

He was rather apprehensive when he met people, but he saw that they did not pay particular heed to him, and therefore concluded that he was not riding very awkwardly.

But one farmer's boy, driving a cart by, sang out:

"Say, Mister, why don't ye put some cobbler's wax in yer saddle. It'll kinder hold yer down."

"The fellow must mean that I'm rising too far from the saddle," reflected Massey. "I shouldn't be at all surprised if I am."

So he seated himself more firmly, and held his feet as tightly to the stirrups as he could, thereby gaining a more rigid seat, but forcing himself to look more awkward than before.

Of a sudden he dropped his riding-whip.

Bringing the horse to a halt, he dismounted and recovered it.

Dolly started to walk along leisurely home.

"Whoa!" he shouted, but the animal kept slowly on.

Then began a most artful race.

It was a race not characterized by speed.

Massey did not dare to run to Dolly's head for fear of startling the animal into a run, in which case he would be left to the ignominious fate of walking home.

So he kept on a walk, gently admonishing the mare every now and then to "whoa," but Dolly would do nothing of the sort.

Imperceptibly Massey quickened his walk, until at last he was near enough to make a quick jump at the animal's head.

He seized the bridle and shouted "whoa!"

Dolly stood perfectly still and gazed at him with an innocent, surprised look which sent Will Massey into convulsions of laughter.

Then he managed to get into the saddle, mounting on the right side of the mare, of course, as all green riders will persist in doing.

He came to a point where two roads met, and on looking down the other one he saw Sibyl and Kennison approaching him at a rapid gallop.

"Thank heaven, I haven't a fast enough horse to keep up with them if they ask me to," he muttered, devoutly.

Now it so happened that Michael had neglected to tell him of one dire failing of Dolly's, and a woeful omission it was.

The mare was desperately afraid of dogs.

A terrier ran out of a house by the road side, and barked frantically at Dolly's heels.

In an instant the mare was in full flight.

Do all that he could Massey could not bring the frightened animal into a more moderate gait.

And then something terrible happened.

First one of his feet came out of the stirrup and then the other. Will tried desperately to get them back again, but the refractory stirrups bobbed about like things of life, and he could not accomplish his purpose.

There was nothing to do but to throw his arms around the mare's neck and hold on tightly, which he did.

"Whoa! whoa!" he cried, despairingly.

He heard the rapid hoof-beat of a horse coming behind him.

Then a clear voice sang out:

"Hold on tightly, Doctor Massey, until I reach you!"

The voice was Sibyl Willoughby's.

"She means to save me," groaned Will Massey, in absolute anguish of soul. "She is riding to my rescue. Ye gods! What a humbling fate!"

CHAPTER V.

SEVERAL THINGS HAPPEN.

It was an humbling fate, but Will had brought it upon himself by false pretences.

Abdallah flew after Dolly with wonderful long strides.

In a few moments the two horses were neck and neck, and this was Sibyl's opportunity.

"Easy, Dolly, easy," she said, soothingly.

The frightened animal, hearing a gentle and familiar voice, slackened its speed.

Will Massey was still keeping his seat by holding his arms around the mare's neck.

Sibyl, riding close to him, reached out her hand and seized Dolly's bridle.

"Whoa!" she commanded, quietly; both horses stood still.

Massey, feeling more ashamed of himself than ever before in his life, resumed an erect posture in the saddle, wriggled his feet into the stirrups at last, and gathered the bridle in both hands.

"What was the trouble?" Sibyl asked, with a sympathy that was more humiliating than ridicule would have been.

"The beast was frightened by a dog," Will answered, shamefacedly.

"And you lost your head as well," Sibyl supplemented, calmly.

Here Will remembered Michael's suggestion.

"To tell the truth," he said, desperately, "it is some years since I have ridden."

"You have never ridden much," said Sibyl, quietly. "Tell me the truth, Doctor Massey, have you ever been on a horse before?"

He glanced at her.

Her keen eyes were looking searchingly into his, and he felt that further pretences would only add to the measure of his disgrace.

"No," he admitted, with sudden frankness, "I have never been on a horse before."

"Why didn't you say so, in the first place, Doctor Massey?"

Will glanced appealingly at this severe questioner.

"I don't know what led me to tell a lie, Miss Willoughby," he said, with sudden frankness. "It was a lie, and I stand disgraced. But I shall not repeat the offence. Believe me, falsehood is a very infrequent practice with me."

"I believe you," she answered, simply. "And, now that you have told me the truth, if you still care to learn to ride, I shall still be very glad to give you a lesson or two."

"If you will be so good," cried Will, with grateful eagerness.

"Very well, then, I will have two of the horses saddled after luncheon, and will give you all the suggestions then that I am able."

"Thank you, a thous——"

"Never mind the thanks, Doctor Massey. And now here comes Mr. Kennison."

That latter personage rode up. He eyed Will with a look of keen amusement.

"What was the trouble, Doctor?" he asked.

"My horse broke and got beyond my control," Will answered, a piece of honesty which won him a side glance of approval from Sibyl.

"Rather a romantic thing to be rescued by a lady," laughed Kennison, with a suggestion of a sneer.

Sibyl shot a disdainful glance at him.

"Take care, sir, that the day does not come when a similar fate shall overtake you."

"Faith, 'twould be a pleasant fate," Kennison answered, lightly; but he felt himself rebuked, and immediately subsided.

The trio now turned their horses' heads homeward, and Sibyl considerately kept at a walk.

Kennison left them at the gate, declining to lunch with them, and Will had opportunity to speak with Sibyl as they were walking their horses up the long driveway.

"I am afraid I look very insignificant in your eyes," Will ventured, humbly.

"It is best to have done with deception," she answered, quietly. "It gives increased confidence."

Judge Willoughby was at the door to receive them.

"So, Massey, you have found a way to amuse yourself after all. But that rascal Fay imposed upon you. He gave you one of the poorest horses in the stable."

"Fay gave me the horse I asked for," Massey replied.

"Then I take it that you like a quiet horse."

"Yes, I do."

"Well, you must pluck up courage, if you want to

ride about with this little girl. She can't abide a slow mount."

Fay's face wore a look of great innocence, as he came around to lead the horses to the stable.

"Have Dolly and Deacon saddled after luncheon, Michael," directed Miss Willoughby. "Doctor Massey and I will ride out together."

"Yes, mum," answered Michael; and, shrewd fellow that he was, he did not even look at the doctor.

Luncheon was *en famille*, and after it Will and Miss Willoughby again mounted.

Sibyl did her best to instruct him in the mysteries of riding, and succeeded beyond her expectations, so eager was Massey to stand well in her estimation.

Ungracious to none, Sibyl proved so cordial and friendly that Massey began to hope, against hope, that some day—some day far in the future—he might win her affections. He was so modest, where women were concerned, that he did not once think of looking forward to that happiness in the near future.

In the contemplation of a possible happiness on a remote day, Will dressed for dinner in the evening with great buoyancy of spirit.

After dinner, the same visitor called who came on the preceding evening.

For a little while Massey had Sibyl to himself.

Then Kennison came and took a seat beside her, and Massey, feeling that odd numbers amounted to a crowd, withdrew, and smoked with the judge.

For the next hour Gilbert Kennison was in clover, since he succeeded in keeping Sibyl to himself, to the great scandal of two or three match-making mammas

who were present, and who had other plans for her future.

Then Calvin Durand came, and, in some way, succeeded in shutting out Kennison, to the latter's great rage and disgust.

Durand applied himself to the conquest of Miss Willoughby with great assiduity, though the fact was altogether unsuspected by the young lady herself.

Sibyl, who, in a general way, possessed shrewd insight into character, tried to determine whether she liked Durand or not.

He was certainly entertaining.

His forty years of life had been crammed full of adventures and experience. He had been all over the world, and had spent much of his time in far away, but fascinating, India.

Such of his experiences and observations as he saw fit to relate possessed a subtle fascination for her.

Especially was she interested in his account of the occult powers professed and practised by the Hindoo fakirs.

"Do you believe in their claims of hypnotic power?" she asked. "And do you believe in hypnotism as an actual mental force?"

Such questions as these would have been altogether too vast for a careless, pleasure-loving man of the world like Gilbert Kennison, but Durand had thoroughly mastered these problems.

He deliberated as to how he should tell her.

"If I tell her too much I may only succeed in warning her to my own disadvantage," he reflected.

So he adopted a medium course.

"I cannot tell how much of hypnotism I believe in

or to what extent," he said, in answer to her question. "The Hindoos have probably practised it for thousands of years, and, for that reason, their knowledge of the subject is unquestionably in advance of that of the rest of the world.

"At the same time the professors of any mysterious art are apt to abuse it, and liable claim for it far more than can be proven. It must rest entirely upon proof, or this reasoning age will reject it."

"Yet," pursued Sibyl, "this hypnotism, mesmerism, occultism, or whatever it is, is believed to be an actual and proven science by many of our most learned men."

"Astrology shared in this same credulity of the wise," commented Durand.

"Yes," assented Sibyl, "but in ages cruder and more barbaric than ours."

"On the contrary, Miss Willoughby. Astrology was believed in by many modern thinkers of no small calibre. Lord Bacon, for instance, confessed that he placed much credence in astrology. Even a few learned men of to-day are inclined to believe that astrology is something of an exact science, and many removes above superstitution. And yet neither you nor I would consult an astrologer, unless in jest."

"And yet," Sibyl went on, "while I have no faith in astrology, I should much like to investigate hypnotism, if I could find a clever practitioner of it, to satisfy myself on the subject."

Durand had been carefully leading her to the point.

"Then consult me," he said, with a smile.

"But you profess to disbelieve in it," she returned.

"Not quite. I am not sure whether I believe in it or not, but I have seen it practised, and have made

something of a study of it. As far as my knowledge of the subject extends, I am willing to attempt a demonstration."

"When?"

"At any time that pleases you. Now, if you wish."

Sibyl hesitated.

"I confess I am anxious to make a trial," she said at last. "But, unfortunately, I am afraid that the time and place are not suited to such a test—not appropriate, I mean."

"May I call to-morrow afternoon, then?" suggested Durand, with concealed eagerness. "We might make a trial in the library, with your father present."

"Yes," she answered, unhesitatingly.

"Then I shall call, you may rest assured."

It was too late to retract now, and Sibyl saw no reason to retract.

Gilbert Kennison now approached them, looking not very pleasant.

"Durand," he said, with affected carelessness, "may I have a few words with you in private?"

"Certainly," responded Durand, rising.

And then bending over Sibyl, he said in a low tone:

"If I do not see you again to-night, remember that I shall call to-morrow afternoon."

For the first time since she had known him, Sibyl saw something in his glance that made her afraid. She shuddered slightly, and drew her wrap more closely over her shoulders.

Durand followed Kennison down the steps and down the driveway.

At last, when he thought they had gone far enough, he asked:

"Can't you stop here, Kennison, and say what you have to say to me?"

"I want to make sure that we shan't be overheard," muttered Kennison, leading on to a point a few yards further ahead.

At last he halted, and Durand did the same.

"Well?" queried the latter.

"I have much to say to you," said Kennison, hoarsely.

"So your conduct intimated," was the calmly-given answer. "Please be as brief as you can, however. I wish to return to Miss Willoughby."

"It is about her I wish to speak," said Kennison, angrily.

"Oh, indeed. What can you have to say about her? Take care, if you mean to slander her."

"D—— you," cried Kennison, clenching his fist.

"Can't we dispense with profanity?" queried Durand, with provoking calmness.

"I am a fool to flatter you with my indignation," blurted Kennison, whose rage had not subsided.

"Granted, but go on."

"I will come to the point right away, sir. Your assiduous attentions to Miss Willoughby during the last two evenings are provoking a great deal of talk."

"I warned you," interposed Durand, calmly, "that I would hear no slander against the lady."

"Curse you, fellow," roared Kennison, "who wants to slander her? I don't."

"Then have a care what you say. That is all."

"See here," muttered Kennison, in an ugly way, "I am paying attentions to Miss Willoughby with the intention of making her my wife."

"Oh!"

"Yes. It appears to surprise you."

"You have surprised me," Durand admitted, calmly. "I can only assume that you have not, as yet, taken the lady into your confidence. When you do you will have less confidence on your own part."

Kennison's brow looked ominous, but he had become more calm.

"See here, Durand, we must understand each other. Are you a suitor for Miss Willoughby's hand?"

"Your question is altogether impertinent. I decline to answer it for that reason."

"Durand, listen to me. You are no fool, and you know that I am terribly in earnest. If you mean anything serious toward Miss Willoughby, I shall go to any extreme whatever to prevent you. You are not in any way fit for her. I know you for a dirty blackguard——"

"Have a care," warned the older man, menacingly.

"Bah! It is not worth while to pick for words to waste upon you. I tell you I will prevent you from paying further attentions to Miss Willoughby at any cost—even if I have to kill you. I would willingly hang, if needs be, to save her from marrying a scoundrel like you."

No man likes to hear such epithets applied to him, however conscious he may be that they are merited.

Durand's eyes blazed. He began to advance upon Kennison with the sinuous motion of a snake. In another instant he sprang upon his traducer.

The two men clinched with a desperate hold.

But the struggle was a short one. Kennison was far more athletic. With a trip and a blow known to wrestlers he sent Durand to the earth.

Durand was on his feet again in a minute. He made another rush, but Kennison struck straight out from the shoulder a terrible blow which caught the older man in the face and sent him to the earth again with a thud.

Then turning contemptuously upon his heel, Kennison made his way back to the house, while Durand arose after a while, his otherwise faultless attire covered with the blood which flowed from a broken nose.

"Where is Mr. Durand?" asked Sibyl when Kennison joined her.

"I understand that he didn't mean to return this evening," answered Kennison, unconcernedly.

Durand didn't return. He went to his hotel to nurse his injured member and to concoct a subtle scheme of revenge that should be keener than brute violence.

CHAPTER VI.

A DISCOURSE AND A DEMONSTRATION.

CALVIN DURAND'S broken nose, though promptly and properly attended to by a local physician, was not a thing of beauty.

During the afternoon of the following day, Sibyl Willoughby received a note from him, in which he stated that the effects of an accident would keep him indoors for a few days. He closed by assuring her that he should call at his earliest opportunity, when he could be depended upon to give her a slight demonstration of hypnotism.

Dr. Massey was talking with Sibyl when the note came. After she had read it, she told him its purport, adding:

"I am much interested in the subject of hypnotism, Doctor Massey, and Mr. Durand, who has had some opportunity to study it in India, has volunteered to give me a private demonstration, with papa present. Do you believe in the existence of such a force?"

"It is a matter in which I am more puzzled than learned," returned Massey. "Physicians are beginning to investigate it more or less, and I have read essays upon the matter and attended lectures and demonstrations. Still I have not made up my mind. What does Mr. Durand say of the subject?"

"He does not happen to be a very firm believer in it," Sibyl answered; "but he has volunteered to show

me what he knows of it, and he says I can then judge for myself."

Massey was silent for a few moments.

Though he knew nothing whatever upon which to found an opinion of Durand, yet he did not altogether like the looks of the man. Massey was skilled in phrenology and physiognomy, and a study of Calvin Durand had brought him to the opinion that the latter belonged to that vaguely defined class of men who are considered dangerous to the happiness of women.

Whether Durand was in love with Sibyl, or merely intended to amuse himself with her, Massey could not decide, but he could not but feel that an intimacy between the two would, at least, result in disadvantage to the girl.

Sibyl noticed Will's silence and inquired the cause of it.

"I have been thinking of what you told me," he answered.

"And what is your opinion? Judging by your countenance it must be a grave one."

"It is more or less so, Miss Willoughby."

"Please speak out, Doctor Massey, and tell me what you mean. I have an intense dislike for riddles and mysteries."

Again Will was silent. He was deliberating how he could best present the matter, as it appeared to him, without giving offence.

Sibyl waited for him to speak, but waited so long that her patience began to wane.

"I am still waiting, Doctor Massey. Your opinion must be a disagreeable one, you are so long in delivering it."

"I fear it is a disagreeable one, Miss Willoughby."

"Nevertheless, I should like to hear it."

"I have been thinking, Miss Willoughby, how I could best present what I have to say," Massey went on. "I dislike to take liberties, and I can only hope that you will look upon me as an old friend, who would plead devotion in mitigation of what might seem to be impudence."

"Proceed, please," said Sibyl, gravely.

Massey now plunged boldly into the subject.

"Hyponotism," said he, "is a mysterious, occult force, in which it is probable that there is considerable foundation. While I do not fully understand it, I believe that it exists, and that it can be used equally as a good or a bad influence. Physicians are now investigating it as a substitute for anæsthetics such as ether or chloroform.

"As such, it has proven a success in many cases. If we admit so much, then it is not unreasonable to suppose that hypnotism may be used as a means of controlling one's actions when in the hypnotic trance. Another point: It has been discovered at the hospitals that a patient, once hypnotized, is much more sensitive to the influence a second time, and the sensitiveness is increased with each time that this condition is produced.

"Following out this idea, it is easy to believe that a person once controlled and subjugated in hypnotic sleep is always thereafter susceptible of the same control. Therefore, Miss Willoughby, I believe that if Durand once succeeded in hypnotizing you he could always afterward do it with increasing facility. Now, it is for you to decide whether it is wise for you to risk putting yourself in any one's power."

"You have given me a spirited and comprehensive essay in a few words," said Sibyl, gravely. "Thank you."

Her tone and manner made Massey uneasy.

"I fear I have offended you," he ventured. "And yet I assure you that what I have said has been said seriously, and without the least desire to do otherwise than to present the matter in what I believe to be its true light."

"What leads you to believe," she demanded, "that Mr. Durand would care to influence me now, or at any future time?"

"I have no reason to think so," Massey answered hastily, "and I did not say that I did."

"Very true; you did not not say it, but you appear to think it."

"Please do not misunderstand me?" pleaded Will. "My only aim was to point out to you the unwisdom of a woman in allowing one of the other sex to try any such experiment with her."

"You think it would be unladylike in me to submit to such an experiment?" demanded Sibyl, rather defiantly.

"Oh, dear, no. Please look upon me only as a physician. As such I have stated certain beliefs of mine on matters which are within my domain. You are not bound to follow my advice."

"Thank you."

Massey began to feel that he was getting into it deeper and deeper, and wished himself well out of it.

"Please do not be ungenerous with me, Miss Willoughby. You asked me for my opinion, and I gave it. You would not wish me to have deceived you?"

Sibyl's brow cleared.

She held out her hand frankly, saying:

"I fear I have been ungenerous. I beg you to forgive me."

Will took her hand, pressed it softly in token of amity, and released it.

"Consider this as a consultation with a physician, Miss Willoughby. People, you know, are in the habit of asking their medical advisers what to do, and then not doing it. Profit, if you wish, by the general example."

"I thank you for your advice," Sibyl answered, "and if I do not follow it it does not follow that I despise it."

Massey bowed, and the matter was dropped.

An hour later saw them taking a canter together before dinner, for Will had profited greatly by the instructions of his teacher, and already rode fairly well on a quiet horse.

Calvin Durand did not present himself to the Willoughbys for a full week. When he did call again his injured nose had healed so well as to make the injury hardly apparent.

Meanwhile, Will Massey was much in Sibyl's company, and the poor fellow became more and more madly in love with her as the days passed by.

Like all lovers, he would have been perfectly happy if he had had reason to suppose that the attachment was returned. But, diffident with women, he made no advances, and naturally Sibyl made none.

Indeed, matters were sometimes much worse than that, for Will, while making strenuous efforts to gain her esteem, often had the misfortune to say something

which the spirited girl construed into sarcasm or impertinence.

"Altogether, Will's existence was not a happy one at that period.

Added to this he always made way for Gilbert Kennison, whom he regarded as an older and more favored suitor.

Kennison, on the other hand, felt decidedly happy. He was convinced that he had effectually disposed of Durand and his pretensions, and looked forward to having the field to himself.

But as soon as Durand felt that he could show himself in public again, he presented himself at the Willoughby mansion.

About this time Kennison received a polite intimation from the judge that less frequent visits would be regarded as a favor.

The poison of Durand's falsehoods had made their impression upon the judge's mind, and Kennison, highly incensed at the undeserved affront, justly laid the blame at his enemy's door.

Durand now became a more frequent visitor, dropping in at all hours, and so completely did he throw his fascination over Sibyl that he had the field as much to himself as he desired.

Then he broached the subject of the proposed hypnotic demonstrations to Judge Willoughby. The latter, greatly interested, assented on the condition that his guest, Dr. Massey, be invited to be present. This was a condition to which Durand consented with a good deal of reluctance.

The time was set for a certain afternoon at four.

It was kept a profound secret.

Besides Durand and Sibyl, only the judge and Will Massey were present or knew anything about it.

They assembled in the library, a spacious apartment, with plenty of working room.

"Now, bear in mind," began Durand, "that I do not profess great credence in the genuineness of hypnotism. If I shall succeed in proving it, it will surprise me even more than it does any of the rest of you."

"Whom will you try for your first subject?" queried the judge.

"Would you like to make the trial?" Durand asked.

This was exactly what the judge wanted.

"Nothing would please me better," he replied.

"Then begin by taking this seat."

Judge Willoughby did as directed, while Sibyl and Will Massey stood before him, looking curiously on.

"Look at me," directed Durand.

The judge looked the speaker squarely and calmly in the eye.

For some moments the men returned each other's gaze, but without any apparent effect.

Durand seemed disappointed; the judge not less so.

"Let us try it another way, then. Shut your eyes this time."

Judge Willoughby closed his eyes, and Durand stroked his eyelids and forehead softly.

At last he stepped back.

The judge's eyes were still closed, and he was, to all appearance, in a deep sleep.

"Now," said Durand, "I will try to make the subject execute a few steps of a dance."

The judge opened his eyes and smiled.

"I will willingly do it for you as a favor, my dear

Durand, but you really must not imagine that I am as yet under your influence."

Durand seemed annoyed.

"I have done my best, sir. If you are not now under my control you never will be."

"I am certainly not at this moment," answered the judge, rising to his feet. He looked disappointed, and so did Sibyl.

"I tried to do it, sir," said Durand. "If I have failed it is not my fault. May I ask you whether you were conscious of any sensation at all?"

"I think I was conscious of something," responded the judge; "but, whatever it was, it did not deprive me of my volition."

"Then I have failed," said Durand, shortly. "I was not at all confident of success."

Will Massey had an opinion of his own. He had watched the proceedings closely, and did not believe that Durand had made any effort upon the judge.

However, he could not, in courtesy, express his opinion, and so held his peace.

Durand now turned to the doctor.

"Shall I make an attempt with you?"

"No," Will answered, "I am here only as a student."

Durand was not greatly disappointed over this refusal, for he cared only to try it with Sibyl.

"Will you volunteer, Miss Willoughby?"

At the last moment Sibyl wanted much to refuse, but Durand had fastened his eyes on hers and held her gaze.

The refusal died on her lips.

"If you wish," she replied, submissively.

"Then take a seat in the chair, please."

She obeyed readily, and Durand stood before her.

Taking one of her hands in his, he commanded:

"Look right into my eyes, please."

Timidly she lifted her eyes to his.

As their glances met again, the intensity of his gaze completely subdued her. She put up her hands appealingly, as if to ward off a danger, and she shuddered convulsively.

"Close your eyes, please," urged Durand, in a coaxing voice.

Obediently the lids sank down.

In a few moments her limp attitude in the chair proved beyond question that she was in a trance.

"I have succeeded better than I expected," said Durand, turning to the two men who were watching him. "But, perhaps I had better convince you that the sleep is genuine."

"No, no," protested both men at once.

"Very well, then, we will proceed to an experiment. Have either of you any choice?"

"A simple one will fully answer the purpose," answered Massey, who knew the whole affair to be a piece of business which he did not want to have carried too far.

"What shall it be?" queried Durand.

"Let her find something at your command," suggested Will.

"Very well."

Durand threw a cloth over the unconscious girl's head, so arranging it that it would have been impossible for her to see if she had been awake.

Massey held up his watch, which he had detached from the chain.

Durand nodded, saying:

"Hide it."

Massey tiptoed to a reading desk, opened one of the drawers and secreted the watch under a pile of papers. Then he returned to his post of observation.

"All ready?" queried Durand.

"All ready."

"Stand up and remove the cloth from your eyes," commanded Durand.

Sibyl did as directed.

"Now find Doctor Massey's watch, if you please."

She turned around confusedly, at first, but, under the strong gaze of Durand, she walked unsteadily to the reading desk, opened the right drawer, found the watch and returned it to Massey.

During the whole of this experiment she kept her eyes open, and conducted herself very much as if in full possession of her senses. But Massey, who had watched her narrowly, felt convinced of the genuineness of the trance.

"Now, Doctor," said Durand, "can you sit perfectly still, and not flinch, during a rather trying ordeal?"

"I will try it," answered Massey, sinking into the chair indicated.

Durand picked up a bronze paper-knife, advanced toward Sibyl, who showed no signs as yet of coming out of the trance.

As he bent over her, he whispered in her ear and placed the knife in her hand.

A malignant gleam shone from his eyes as he did so, but neither the judge nor Will Massey saw it.

The experiment about to be performed was the critical one—one which no mesmerist has a right, under any circumstances, to perform.

CHAPTER VII.

MASSEY HAS HIS INNINGS.

"THE subject," announced Durand, "will now do what it is safe to say she never did before—she will commit a murder."

The judge started, but a momentary look of apprehension gave way to one of deep interest.

"Pardon my interruption," put in Dr. Massey, "but I must warn you not to carry this demonstration too far."

"I am conducting it," returned Durand.

"My objection is made as that of a physician," said Massey, spiritedly.

"Why do you feel called upon to interfere—to prevent?" demanded Durand, ill-humoredly.

"I do not mean to prevent. I only counsel moderation in a test which the experience of the past has shown to be dangerous when performed upon people of sensitive nervous natures."

"Thank you,"—stiffly.

"Take this knife," Durand added to Sibyl.

She took it, and clutched it firmly in her right hand.

"You have a deadly enemy present," said the hypnotist, in low tones. "He sits over there in the chair," indicating Massey. "He seeks your life, and the only way you can preserve yourself is to slay him. Don't delay, or you may be too late to save your own life."

A look of fierce determination shone in Sibyl's eyes, which had heretofore been expressionless.

At the command, she arose and advanced with cat-like stealth upon Massey.

The latter sprung to his feet.

"This has gone too far!" he cried.

"Sit down," ordered Durand.

"I object to having this go any further," shouted Massey.

"Are you afraid of being killed with a bronze paper-knife?" queried Durand, sneeringly.

Massey turned to the judge.

"If you permit this to go any further, sir, you may be guilty of ruining your daughter's life. Bid this fellow to desist, Judge Willoughby, and I will then give my reasons, if you wish."

"This is nonsense," cried Durand, angrily. "Let us proceed with the demonstration."

But the judge had become alarmed by Massey's words.

"No, no; we have had enough of it for to-day," he said. "Mr. Durand, if you please, take Miss Willoughby out of the trance. Doctor Massey speaks as a physician and I am persuaded that he should be heeded."

Durand bowed.

"If you wish it, sir."

"I do wish it."

Durand bowed again and led Sibyl back to her seat. He took the knife from her hand and clapped his hands suddenly before her eyes.

She started and came out of the trance.

At sight of the paper-knife on the table she started

again, showing that she had some disagreeable impression—vague though it was—connected with the knife.

"How do you feel, my darling?" asked the judge, solicitously.

"Strange, papa, strange."

"In what way, my child?"

"Chilled, cold." She shuddered as she encountered Durand's piercing eyes.

"You had better go to your room, child," advised the judge.

"Let me ring and send for her aunt, sir. Then, if I am needed, I will go up and prescribe for her later."

"One moment," interposed Durand, savagely. "I seem to stand in the unenviable light of one accused of injuring a young lady's health in the practice of a scientific demonstration. Let me interrogate Miss Willoughby, myself."

Fixing his piercing eyes upon her, Durand asked with a blandness which belied his looks:

"Let me inquire of you, Miss Willoughby, if you really feel any depressing effects from your trance?"

She looked at her questioner in a troubled way, plainly shrinking before his gaze.

"No," she answered.

Durand turned to Massey.

"Now, Doctor, I hope that on the testimony of the lady herself you will be good enough to exculpate me from all blame."

"We can discuss this later," answered Massey.

A servant answering the bell, Judge Willoughby ordered that his sister be desired to come to him in the library.

The elder Miss Willoughby shortly presented herself.

"Sibyl is not well," said the judge. "Please take her to her room, and if you need Doctor Massey you have only to call him."

The judge's sister, wondering what in the world had happened, led her young charge from the room.

Durand turned to Massey.

"May I ask, sir, the reason, and the meaning of your hostility to me?"

"I am guilty of no hostility," returned Massey, quietly. "You yourself saw the condition of Miss Willoughby when she came out of the trance. Such an ending frequently results, with sensitive people, in that way, and especially when the subject is a woman.

"If you wish to know why I interfered with the mock-murder scene, I will tell you. It is one of the most terrible tests to put any hypnotic subject to, and frequently produces prostration. Such a scene, too, has sometimes been repeated by the subject after apparently coming out of the trance, and an unconscious murder has been the result. Since you have made a study of hypnotism, you cannot fail to be aware of that fact."

"Then you impute evil motives to me?" demanded Durand.

His manner was decidedly ugly.

"By no means," returned Massey, quietly.

"At all events, you insinuate that I was careless and reckless?"

"I certainly think so."

At this direct admission the two men glared at each other.

There was certainly something unusual in Durand's glance.

Even Massey felt himself under its influence, though outwardly he appeared calm and firm.

When Durand found his voice to speak again his tones were calm—dangerously calm.

"Another thing, Doctor Massey. A few moments ago you referred to me as a 'fellow.' Are you aware that that is a very offensive term?"

"Yes."

"Then I shall demand satisfaction."

"Stop, stop a bit, young men," interposed the judge. "You are both my guests, and I forbid you to quarrel in my house. Now, be sensible, both of you, and behave as gentlemen should."

"You interrupted me," pursued Massey, calmly. "I was about to say to Mr. Durand that I used the objectionable word in the heat of the moment, and had no idea of insulting him. I do not make this apology in fear, however, but merely in courtesy. If it is not ample, then Mr. Durand will have to have recourse to the 'satisfaction' which he proposed."

"I am perfectly satisfied," interposed Durand, who feared that he might lose valuable ground in the judge's household.

"Why not shake hands?" suggested the judge.

"Certainly."

They exchanged a brief pressure, but both felt sure that it did not mean amity. They possessed the instinctive aversion common to men who are enemies from the first.

"I must now return to the hotel," said Durand. "It is growing late in the afternoon."

"Stay to dinner," urged the judge.

"Thank you, I cannot. I must return; there are pressing reasons."

"It is going to storm, and soon, too," observed the judge, looking out of the window. "Since you will not dine with us, Mr. Durand, let me order the coupe for you."

"Thank you, if you will."

In five minutes the coupe was at the door.

Durand shook hands with the judge, but, as if by tacit understanding between them, did not offer that courtesy to Dr. Massey.

As soon as the guest had departed, Judge Willoughby proposed to Massey that they go up to Sibyl's room to inquire after her.

"She may not care to receive me there," objected Will.

"Nonsense. You can go in as her medical adviser."

They presented themselves at Sibyl's door, and were admitted by the maid.

Sibyl was seated by the window, gazing out through the semi-darkness at the fast gathering storm.

"How do you feel?" the judge queried, anxiously, crossing the room and bending over her.

"All right, now, papa."

"Are you sure of it, my pet?"

"Positive, papa."

"Shall I leave Doctor Massey with you while I go below?"

"If he would like to stay."

Will forthwith seated himself and the judge departed.

"What are your sensations after the test?" he inquired, after a few moments had passed in silence.

"Queer."

She looked at him with a pathetic smile, as she returned this monosyllable answer.

With a grave professional air Massey placed his finger on her pulse and glanced at the second hand of his watch.

"Pulse low and depressed," he mused to himself.

Then aloud:

"Can you give me a more exact description of the way in which you feel?"

"Physically I am numb," she murmured. "I am 'blue' and despondent, and feel as if I were dreading some disaster which I have not power to avert."

Massey knew well enough that people who have been in hypnotic trance are rarely affected in this manner, and he was not a little uneasy.

"How do you account for it?" he asked. "Can you not account for it in some other way than in connection with Mr. Durand's test?"

"I wish I could," she answered, plaintively.

"Be confidential with me, Miss Willoughby. Look upon me as your physician. Besides that, you know I am your well wisher in every way."

Massey spoke in his accustomed low, calm tones, and his words carried conviction of his sincerity to Sibyl's ears.

"I wish the test had not been tried," she said, gazing gloomily out at the black clouds.

Massey drew the shades and lighted a lamp.

"Gazing at the threatening clouds does not increase your cheerfulness," he said, explanatorily.

"I wish that were all that oppressed me," she sighed

"I advised you to have nothing to do with the test. I was afraid it would affect you."

"I know you did, Doctor Massey, and I heartily wish I had followed your advice, but Mr. Durand is a man whom it seems difficult to refuse. Will you tell me what things I was made to do?"

"The first test was a simple one," Will answered. "You were asked to find my watch, after it had been hidden, and you did it easily."

"And then?"

"And then you were provided with a paper-cutter, and told to kill me."

Sibyl shuddered and looked fearfully at him.

"Did I try to do it?" she asked, faintly.

"You left the chair to do so, but at that point I thought it best to interfere. At your father's request Mr. Durand brought you out of the trance."

"It is a terrible power for human beings to possess," Sibyl said, tremblingly.

"It is, indeed."

"I feel," she continued, "that when Mr. Durand looks at me I shall be compelled, even against my will, to do whatever he directs me to do."

"Let me advise you, Miss Willoughby," said Will, earnestly, "to have no more to do with these tests. Their effect upon you is far from favorable."

"I could wish," she cried, vehemently, "never to see that man again. Would you advise me, Doctor Massey, to ask papa never to let him come here again?"

Will Massey was perplexed at this question.

He felt positively that it would be best so, but he realized by this time that Calvin Durand was a rival

for Sibyl's hand, and Will's notions of honor would not let him take the least unfair advantage of a rival.

So, after a moment's thought, he answered:

"That is a point upon which I cannot easily advise you, Miss Willoughby. I must leave it to you. Though Mr. Durand possesses an unpleasant power, he appears to be a gentleman, and, as such, I cannot urge you to cease his acquaintance."

"You asked me a minute ago," she said, eagerly, "to confide in you. May I do so, in the future, if I should desire to?"

"Miss Willoughby," said Massey, gravely, "you may look upon me as your friend at all times, and when I use that word I do not mean it in the stereotyped sense. You can always rely upon me to serve you in any way in my power."

"I am afraid of Mr. Durand," she said, nervously.

"You have only to remember what I have said," Will answered quietly. "And now, Miss Willoughby, I would advise you to summon your maid, dress, and join the family down-stairs. It will do you no good to sit here, a prey to disturbing thoughts."

* * * * * *

If Sibyl Willoughby felt afraid of Calvin Durand, she was not the only woman in that predicament.

Could she have looked into a certain room at the hotel that evening she would have discovered greater cause than she knew for apprehension.

Durand was lolling in a huge arm chair in Lise d'Armettre's apartments. He was indolently smoking a cigarette, and opposite him sat the Frenchwoman, similarly engaged.

The threatened storm had broke with autumnal fury,

preventing him from finding a pretext for visiting the Willoughby's.

"It seems good to have you for a whole evening, Calvin," Madame d'Armettre was saying. "It is not often that I am so favored since you have become acquainted with the little American girl. Ah, well, I am silly to fret. It is only a little infatuation, which will soon wear off, and I shall be restored to favor."

"Lise," said Durand, earnestly, "my feelings toward Miss Willoughby are not those of mere infatuation. I mean to marry her—shortly, too—and it will be well for you to realize the fact. I tell you positively that I shall soon marry the young lady."

"And then, what will become of me, Monsieur Calvin?"

Durand shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, you will share the fate of all discarded mistresses, I suppose—you will find some one else and be happy again."

"If I am not a good woman," shrieked the Frenchwoman shrilly, "pray tell me, Monsieur Calvin, whose fault it is? I was good until I met you. It is you who have destroyed me. I swear to you that I will destroy your chances with the young lady if you try to cast me off."

Durand arose and eyed the Frenchwoman sternly. Her eyes fell before his, and her face paled whiter than the lace at her throat.

"Bah," was all he said, and left the room.

Mme. d'Armettre fell upon her knees and extended her hands supplicatingly.

"Sainte Marie!" she moaned. "If he forsakes me help me to crush this man who tramples upon our sex."

CHAPTER VIII.

DURAND SHOWS HIS BRUTAL SIDE.

A MAN of action often prefers a very ordinary plan to no immediate plan at all; but most men of action are not long in devising plans which are much more than ordinary.

Calvin Durand now felt that he had spent time enough on preliminaries, and one of his ingenious turn of mind is not long in determining what is next to be done.

On the morning after the hypnotic test at Judge Willoughby's, he arose in good season, breakfasted heartily, lit a cigar, and set out for a stroll.

His way led him to the Willoughby grounds, which were several hundred acres in extent.

He jumped over the stone wall which separated one of the fields from the road, and pursued his way along a beaten path among the trees.

He hoped to find Sibyl, and he was not mistaken.

Before he saw anyone a low, ominous growl greeted him.

"Be still, Nero," he heard, in Sibyl's clear sweet tones.

But the mastiff did not stop growling. He bounded out of the bushes and sniffed at Durand's heels, keeping up the threatening growl all the time.

A setter followed the mastiff, and uttered a series of short barks.

Durand thought it best not to attempt to pass the dogs, which looked ready to fly at him upon small provocation.

Then Sibyl came into sight.

"Still, Nero! Still, Fancy!" she commanded.

Then she caught sight of Durand, and started.

He advanced and held out his hand.

"Good-morning, Miss Willoughby."

"Good-morning, Mr. Durand. I did not expect to see you here. How did you know where to find me?"

"You assume that I came to find you," he laughed. "You are quite right, Miss Willoughby. I did come to find you, and I am happy now that I have done so. How did I know where to find you? Naturally knew that you would be out doors on such a morning as this, and so strolled through the fields in the hope of finding you."

"Our friends are in the habit of coming to the house when they wish to see us," she said, coldly.

Durand appeared annoyed at this rebuke.

"Am I to infer that you are not very glad to see me?" he asked.

"Not very glad," she assented, promptly.

"Why?"

The abruptness of the question startled her.

"I—I do not know," she answered, hesitatingly.

"Do you dislike me, Miss Willoughby?"

"I do not know, Mr. Durand."

"Then I am safe in assuming that you probably do?"

"I did not say that, Mr. Durand."

And after a pause she added:

"You are different from other men I have met, and I do not understand you."

"You are not afraid of me?" he asked, gently.

This question aroused Sibyl.

She was afraid of Durand, but she would not have admitted it to him for a great deal.

"No, I am not afraid of you," she replied, proudly, but with some hesitancy.

Durand took her hand. She wanted to snatch it away from him, but did not. She seemed incapable of action.

"Miss Willoughby, I am glad we have met this morning, and glad we have had this conversation. I esteem you very much—do not start so—and I want to be your friend. Will you permit me to be?"

Sibyl gazed at him in a frightened way, and then her glance fell.

"I—I do not care about it," she answered, shrinking almost imperceptibly away from him.

Durand's manner became at once frigid.

"Would you rather have me for an enemy?" he asked, coldly.

Sibyl was silent for a few minutes. She kept her eyes fastened on the ground and her breast heaved tumultuously.

At last she raised her eyes to his and cried out passionately:

"I would rather, much rather, that you leave me alone altogether. I do not want to know you or see you again."

"Take care, Sibyl!"

His tone was so cold and malignant that she gave a palpable start, in spite of herself, and then a frightened glance at him.

"What do you mean?" she stammered.

"I mean," he answered, slowly and deliberately, "that you cannot cast me away. I mean to be near you when I desire, and it is not for you to deny me."

"You coward," she cried, piteously.

"Take care, Sibyl, that you do not call me ugly names. The day may soon come when you will rue it."

All the defiance in Sibyl's nature was aroused at this direct challenge.

"Mr. Durand, if I were to repeat these words of yours to one of my friends of your own sex, how long do you think you would have to live?"

"You would set them on to murder me?" jeeringly.

"It is not worth your while to pretend to misunderstand me. If I told them all that you have said to me this morning I could not prevent them from hunting you down and taking your life."

In her fear of the man she used strong words.

"And when they came to me," he answered, coldly, "they would quail before me just as you are about to do now."

As he spoke Durand fixed his eyes upon Sibyl's.

The look in his eyes fascinated her, as the gaze of a deadly serpent would have done.

She fell back a step and clutched at a tree for support.

Durand stood with his arms folded on his breast, and his steady gaze soon put her under complete subjugation.

"You owe me an apology for your rude language," he said, after a while.

Sibyl's eyes flashed for a brief moment. She made a vain effort to assert herself and failed.

She was too completely in the man's power to be capable of further resistance.

"I—I apologize," came weakly from her lips.

"And your threats?"

"I apologize for them, too," she answered, faintly.

"You are forgiven—this time," he returned, mockingly. "Take care, however, that you do not offend again, for I am not always lenient with those who cross my will."

"I will take care," she repeated, still staring helplessly at him.

A change came over Durand.

He became at once brusque and reassuring.

"It is tedious for you to stand here, Sibyl," he said, in a more tender tone. "Suppose we stroll along."

"If you wish," she assented.

They walked along together, Durand frequently picking a handful of autumn leaves for Sibyl.

It was an odd style of courtship, but Durand had learned, from the past, that it was a style which removed all obstacles from his path at once.

The dogs, evincing no very friendly feeling toward him, kept suspiciously at his heels, ready to spring upon him the instant he might develop outward hostility to their beloved mistress.

But Durand was all gentleness now.

As far as it was in his nature to love he loved Sibyl, and could not bring himself to exercise what he considered unnecessary cruelty toward her.

When they had strolled along until nearly in sight of the Willoughby mansion Durand halted, and his companion paused likewise.

"Let us sit here for a few minutes," he proposed.

Sibyl assented, and took a seat near him on the low broad wall.

"Do you object to my smoking?" he queried.

"No."

Durand lighted a cigarette, and puffed at it indolently.

Sibyl stared about her, wishing to get away from him, yet not daring to make the effort.

The dogs crouched at her feet, and looked appealingly up into her face.

"Does Kennison cause you much annoyance?" Durand asked, after he had smoked awhile in silence.

Sibyl looked surprised. She certainly was.

After waiting for an answer, Durand repeated his question.

"I do not understand you," she responded.

"What I wish to know is, whether he makes violent love to you?"

Sibyl's face turned crimson.

"You have no right to ask such a question," she protested weakly.

"I assume the right. Please answer me."

"I hardly know how to," she replied.

"Well, then, I will put the question in another way: Do you think, from his actions, that he is in love with you?"

"I suppose so," she answered, turning crimson again.

"Has he ever proposed to you?"

"No."

"Do you think he is likely to?"

"Sir!"

"True," rejoined Durand, calmly. "You can hardly

be expected to know that. If he does, however, you will of course refuse him."

Sibyl was certainly a rebellious subject.

"Mr. Durand, you presume a little too far," she exclaimed, angrily.

"Much too far, I admit," he rejoined, calmly, blowing out a cloud of smoke. "It is a way of mine. Women adore a master."

"A master!" she repeated, bitterly.

"Yes. As I said before, if he offers himself you are to refuse him. As to your other admirer, that young doctor, Massey, I imagine he is far too diffident to propose to you right away."

Sibyl's whole being trembled with rage at this calmly insolent man who styled himself her master.

Yet she seemed incapable of more than a weak defiance, and decided to forego that rather than excite his ridicule.

"How old are you?" he asked, after another pause.

"Twenty-one."

"Your own mistress, then?"

There was a covert sneer in these words which did not escape Sibyl's sensitive ear.

After another pause, he threw away his cigarette, and arose.

"I am a mind-reader," announced Durand. "I can read your mind very easily, Sibyl. You are tired. You want to go to your own room, and rest. Is it not so?"

"Yes! yes!" she cried, eagerly, glad of any excuse and any terms to escape him for a while, at least.

"This afternoon," he went on, "I am going away,

to be gone two or three days. It is urgent business that takes me away. Nothing else would."

The delight in Sibyl's eyes was so transparent that Durand was secretly nettled.

"Meanwhile," he went on, coldly, "do not abuse your liberty. When I return I shall come at once to see you."

Sibyl was silent, and Durand rightly interpreted her thoughts.

"Do not imagine that you will refuse to see me when I call," he answered. "You may refuse me once, twice, or thrice, but I shall get at you sooner or later if you do. And then you would have all the heavier reckoning to pay with me. I am not a man to be jilted or easily gotten rid of. When I am trifled with I can wait patiently, for years even, to revenge myself. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she answered, faintly.

"And now I will leave you. Will you kiss me, Sibyl, before I go?"

He stepped forward and offered to embrace her.

Sibyl, trembling with fear and disgust, shrank back from him.

"No, no," she cried, beseechingly.

Fancy and Nero, the dogs, stood between them, growling and showing their teeth.

"Very well," Durand said, calmly. "I will not force myself upon you. It may take some time for you to get used to me. Au revoir for a few days, Sibyl."

He lifted his hat, smiled mockingly, and left her, going rapidly in the direction of the road.

Sibyl, as soon as she was sure that she was rid of

him, ran rapidly through the woods toward the house, followed by the dogs.

There had been an eavesdropper.

Michael Fay, the coachman, tired of work, had wandered out into the forest to have a quiet, reflective pull at his "dudeen."

Half-reclining behind a clump of bushes, not far distant, he had overheard all.

Now that the field was clear, he emerged from his hiding-place, and stood gazing down the path in the direction taken by Durand.

"Well, of all the lovers," he muttered, "yure the strangest I ever saw. I wonder if yure engaged to be married to Miss Sibyl. Sure, she must be blind, dafe and dumb to promise to marry a man like you. An' I'm surproised, if her father, the judge, hes consinted to it."

Mike took a few reflective puffs and then resumed:

"A nice man ye are to be t'reatenin' a little leddy loike Miss Sibyl. It's a wonder to me that she'll have ye, at all, at all. But, thin, there's no accountin' fur wimmen. There wuz Katie O'Brien, fur instance, who married Larry O'Dowd, when she moight a had me fur less'n the asking."

From which it will be seen that Michael misunderstood the case. He believed, from what he had seen and heard, that Sibyl was betrothed to Durand, reluctantly though it might be.

"Arrah, ye shcorpion," Michael muttered, shaking his fist in the direction Durand had taken. "If ye talk that way to the young leddy before ye've married her, how'll yez talk to her aftherwards.

"Look out, ye blackguard, ye don't shtumble over

Mike Fay, some night in the dark. Oh, if I only had two or t'ree of the Tipperary boys here wid me. Stone t'rowers, they called us in the ould country. Sure, it's not stone t'rowing we'd be wastin' our time wid when we had a man loike Misther Durand to dale wid."

Shaking his head ominously, Fay turned in the direction of the stables.

Sibyl fled direct to the house, without once looking behind her. She felt that if she could only gain its friendly shelter she could leave fear behind her.

As soon as she had entered the house her first instinct was to find Dr. Massey, tell him what had happened, and invoke the aid which she knew he would so readily grant her.

But the memory of all Durand had said came to her, and even now she trembled with a nameless dread of the man who so easily controlled her.

Instead of consulting Massey, she flew up the stairs, locked herself into her room and threw herself upon the bed.

For a long time she remained there, sobbing convulsively.

Gradually she became calmer, outwardly, though her agitation had by no means left her.

"Must I submit to this wretch, and do all that he desires?" she wondered. "I might appeal to papa and my friends, but would ever they be able to protect me from him? He says not, and I--oh, I am afraid I believe him."

Sibyl began to sob quietly, and, in the midst of it, she fell into a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. KENNISON RECEIVES TWO CALLERS.

"COME right in, Doc. I'm glad to see you."

Dr. Massey closed the door behind him, and Gilbert Kennison strode forward and grasped his hand.

"I'm only in hotel quarters, now," said the latter. "I was much more cosily fixed at the Darlingtons', but they've gone away, and for various reasons I didn't care to go with them."

"You seem cosy enough here," answered Massey, looking over the spacious parlor in which he stood, and then into the bedroom beyond.

"Yes, I have a good many of my own traps here, and they make a place look more homelike than landlords are able to do. By the way, Doc., have you breakfasted yet?"

"Hours ago," laughed Massey.

"I suppose so. I'm lazy constitutionally. Just had the breakfast things sent down before you came. Have a brandy and soda, then?"

"Never use them," returned Massey.

"Dare say I should be better off if I didn't," said Kennison, mixing a small glassful and drinking it at a gulp. "You'll have a cigar with me, though, I suppose?"

Smoking was Doctor Massey's weak point in the catalogue of small vices. Both men lit perfectos,

and settled themselves in easy chairs with their feet elevated upon a convenient table.

"I've been anxious to have you come and see me ever since I made your acquaintance," Kennison went on. "Thought you were stiff and priggish at first, but changed my mind."

"It was very good of you to do so," answered Massey, with a smile.

"Oh, I don't mean to affect condescension," Kennison went on with a shake of his head. "I knew well enough that sort of thing wouldn't go down with you. But one meets a very few good fellows in a sleepy little summer place like this."

"I see," nodded Massey. "It seems strange to me that you ever came here."

"Oh, I came down with the Darlingtons at the beginning of the season. Was rather struck with their second daughter, Edith, then, but when I fell in Miss Willoughby's path I forgot about all the other girls. Edie is engaged to another fellow by this time, so I imagine there's no heart broken on either side."

It pained Massey to hear his companion speak of Sibyl Willoughby as if she partly belonged to him. By this time Massey had reached the jealous and feverish period, too, though he was so quiet and conservative that none was apt to suspect it.

"Awfully nice girl, Sibyl Willoughby," pursued Kennison, after a pause.

"Very," returned Will, dryly.

"You may think I'm too confidential," Kennison went on, "but there's no use denying I am badly struck on her. Everybody in this sleepy old town has known it for the last two months."

For a moment Massey felt a wild longing to strangle that man at his side.

But only for a moment. Kennison was an honest, good-humored fellow, with whom it was difficult to be out of sorts.

And Massey reflected that the other had far more right than he to think and speak of Sibyl, for he was an old admirer of hers; while he, Massey, had never let any one suspect the extent of his feelings for her.

There was another pause, broken by Kennison's asking suddenly:

"Doc., what do you think of Durand?"

"As a man or an ideal study?"

"Ideal nothing!" retorted Kennison, with more vehemence than elegance. "I've known the fellow in New York for two years past, and I consider him a dirty scoundrel."

"On what grounds?" asked Massey. "Is he dishonest?"

"Not so far as I know, in the way that you mean. But he's destroyed the happiness of many a woman in the short time that I've known him. I don't see anything captivating about the fellow, but he manages to fascinate a good many women. Plays with them for his own amusement and throws them over when he is tired of them. I often felt that it would be a service to humanity if somebody would shoot him. I myself had the pleasure of giving him a broken nose the other night."

Massey's looks betrayed his interest in this statement.

"I thought something had happened to his nasal organ," he answered.

"Yes. Called him a scoundrel. He didn't like it. Jumped at me, and I was forced to hurt him."

Kennison jerked this explanation out in his rapid manner, and Will was greatly amused.

"What was the trouble?" he inquired.

"Oh, about Sybil," was the laconic answer.

This statement irritated Massey.

"Did you have the lady's consent to quarrel about her?" he asked.

"No, naturally not," Kennison returned, coolly. "The row was purely an impromptu affair. I didn't mean to go so far until I got to talking with the fellow, and then my blood boiled up. I meant only to warn him."

"Warn him about what?" Massey was getting unreasonably jealous, just as most any other man would have done in his place.

"Oh, I know the fellow's disposition with women. He's not fit to associate with Sibyl—Miss Willoughby—and I told him so. Told him if he persisted in hanging around her I'd kill him."

"But you wouldn't, would you?" queried Will.

"Don't know. Might, if I was pushed too far."

Kennison made the declaration off-handedly, but Will, who was a good judge of human nature, made up his mind that the good-natured fellow opposite him could be transformed into a dangerous man, with sufficient provocation.

"I must watch him," muttered Will, "or he might be foolish enough to take Durand's life, and with the best intentions in the world. These impulsive fellows are usually true as steel, but they are apt to go into a thing head first, and get themselves into scrapes."

"Kennison," he said aloud, after a pause, "since you have been good enough to confide in me, let me give you a little advice. I think you were too hasty in using force with Durand. Let me advise you not to repeat anything so rash. You will only get the worst of it, for I am sure that Durand is a quiet, shrewd one, and only counter-cunning will defeat him."

"But I can't match him, there," Kennison blurted out, honestly. "I'm not a brainy fellow, and I'm no match for that villain Durand. When it comes to a game of cunning, he'll have the best of me every time."

"I don't know that I'm exactly what you call a brainy fellow, either," returned Massey, smiling. "But we two ought to be a match for him. I'll help you, if you wish."

"You're a brick!" cried Kennison, jumping up and shaking Will's hand warmly. "Of course I'd like you to help me. You supply the brains, and I'll do the fighting, when it's necessary."

"I must insist upon one thing," answered Will, quietly. "There must be no fighting at all. Durand may not return a blow when he gets one, but it makes him doubly subtle and dangerous."

"All right," responded Kennison, "but I'm sorry there's to be no fighting. It's about the only thing I know how to do in a case like this." And then:

"See here, Doc., isn't it fair for me to ask why you are interested in this affair to such an extent?"

"Judge Willoughby and my father were life-long friends," Massey answered, "and I am anxious to do anything I can for any member of the judge's family."

"Are you sure you are not going to be my rival?" asked Kennison, anxiously.

"I admire Miss Willoughby more than any young lady I know," Will returned, frankly. "But, at the same time, I don't think you have much to fear from me."

"I'd rather hear that from Sibyl," retorted Kennison, sharply. And then he added, more generously:

"We won't have anything to say on that head, Doc. Perhaps, when it comes to the point, she wouldn't have either of us."

"Very likely not," Will assented, quietly.

"We'll let that go," Kennison proposed. "Let the best man win her, whoever he is. We'll unite our forces to save her from Durand. Do you think she likes the fellow so much as she seems to?"

"I don't think she likes him at all," Massey answered. "I believe Durand has what old-fashioned people call an 'evil eye.'"

"And what the deuce is that?" Kennison inquired.

"Well, I believe his eyes possess some extraordinary quality of controlling others, based on hypnotic influences. The discoveries of modern science would lead us to believe in the existence of some such power. Durand, I think, has it, knows it, and is making use of it to control Miss Willoughby to his own ends."

"The devil!" cried Kennison, savagely, leaping to his feet. "At this rate he will be married to her while we fellows are talking about him."

And then, subsiding into a chair, he demanded:

"Can't we do something to break in upon this influence?"

"I don't know yet," Massey answered. "We might get the judge to take Miss Willoughby away, but that wouldn't do any good. Durand would only follow her."

"True," groaned Kennison.

"I must be going now," said Massey, rising. "We can do nothing this morning, but I will think it all over and see what we can do. I feel as if we were acting like a pair of presumptuous fellows, to say the best of it."

"I don't," retorted Kennison, emphatically. "We shall be doing Sibyl a service that she will thank us for later."

Massey departed, leaving Kennison buried in thought and submerged in tobacco smoke.

"Why wasn't I born with brains?" groaned Kennison, "that I might be able to get the lead of this fellow Durand, and I wouldn't have to depend on a rival, either."

Kennison spent the next half hour in smoking fiercely, and reflecting bitterly on his own incapacity to do anything in a matter which most vitally interested him.

While he was thus reflecting his valet glided into the room and handed him a card. On it was inscribed:

"A Lady."

"A lady?" repeated Kennison to himself. "Who the deuce can she be? Sibyl? No; she wouldn't come clandestinely. A lady? This is no blackmail scheme, I hope." Then aloud:

"Show her in, Bronk."

The valet withdrew, and presently the lady in question entered. She was dressed oddly, and completely veiled.

"What can I do for you?" asked Kennison, after placing a chair for her.

"Are we alone?" she asked, in low tones, evidently trying to disguise her voice.

"Quite alone, I believe," Kennison answered, rather stiffly.

"And no one within earshot?" persisted the lady behind the veil.

"I think not."

Then the thought occurred to him that perhaps Durand had sent this woman to him to compromise him in Sibyl's eyes. The thought caused cold shivers to run down his spinal column. He had difficulty in restraining himself from showing the lady out without further ceremony.

"Sir, I have come to see you on very confee-dential business. Can I trust you, sir, in the disclosures I am about to make?"

Kennison was now divided between curiosity and fear of blackmail. He replied:

"Certainly, madame, if, as an honest man I am justified in keeping the secret."

"Ah! Your word! That is all I want."

She withdrew her veil, and Lise d'Armettre met his astonished gaze.

"Madame d'Armettre?" he gasped.

"Yes, Monsieur Kennison."

"But why should you disguise yourself before coming to see me?"

"Because, monsieur, even my life might not be safe, if it were known that I had called upon you."

"Go on," he said, breathlessly.

"Monsieur Kennison, I have not come to you without much deliberation, and I have a confession to make to you which is always degrading to a woman."

"I will urge you to tell me none of your secrets."

"But I must tell you this one, Monsieur Kennison, or you might not believe what else I have to tell you. Listen: Calvin Durand is my lover, and has been for three years."

Kennison started violently.

"I have never heard anything of this," he blurted.

"Naturally not, monsieur, for it has been a secret. Calvin Durand would not care to have it known, for he never meant to marry me."

Again the fear came into Kennison's mind that this woman was an agent employed by Durand to entrap him, but he dismissed the thought, and begged her to proceed.

"Monsieur Durand means to marry Mademoiselle Willoughby. And, as he has set his heart on it, he will do it. I tell you, monsieur, that when he turns the glamour of those terrible eyes of his on a woman, she no longer has any indee-viduality of her own. I I know this, for have I not experienced it?"

"Why do you tell me this?" Kennison asked, suspiciously.

"Because, wretch though he be, I love this Monsieur Durand. I cannot live without him. I would go to any length to prevent him from leaving me for another woman, though I tell you, my life would not be safe, if he knew I had told you this."

"But why do you come to me?" persisted Kennison.

"Are you not the lover of Mademoiselle Sibyl?" demanded the Frenchwoman, naïvely. "To whom else should I go for help in this matter?"

"True," he assented. "But, if Durand has this dev-

ilish power which you ascribe to him, how is he to be prevented from carrying out his purpose? Miss Willoughby will naturally marry the man whom she elects. If Durand fascinates or subjugates her, how is he to be prevented from marrying her?"

"There is but one way in which it can be done," cried Madame d'Armettre, eagerly, "and it must be a brave man who shall do it."

"And you believe I am that brave man?"

"Why not, monsieur?"

"Thank you."

"You marry her," continued the Frenchwoman, "and then, as her husband, you have the right to keep Monsieur Calvin from going near her. But, for the matter of that, if she is once married, Monsieur Durand will make no effort to trouble her."

"And how do you know that?" Kennison asked.

"Because, monsieur, this Durand cares not enough for any woman to marry her, unless she can bring him money. If Mademoiselle Sibyl marries you, she will bring her dowry to you, and then Monsieur Calvin will look for some other beautiful young lady who has money. He has not money enough of his own to live as he desires."

"I understand," nodded Kennison.

"And now I must go," said the Frenchwoman, rising. "Work quickly, monsieur, for Durand will be back to-morrow, and then your chances with your sweetheart are poor. If I learn anything more I will come and let you know. But, remember, whatever you do, do not hurt Monsieur Durand, for I love him still."

"I'll try to keep my hands off him," said Kennison,

and Madame d'Armettre departed, after carefully drawing her veil down over her features.

Gilbert Kennison sank into a chair after she was gone and gave himself up to reflection.

"I know no reason why I should tell Doctor Massey of this," he mused. "We are both to have an even chance for Sibyl, and this seems to be my opportunity. To work, Gilbert, old boy."

CHAPTER X.

AN INTERRUPTED CONFIDENCE.

KENNISON did some unusually hard thinking during the remainder of the day.

In the evening, with the problem still unsolved, he called at Judge Willoughby's.

He was informed that Miss Sibyl was indisposed and was keeping to her room.

As to the judge, Kennison did not wait to see him, for had not that good old gentleman asked him pointedly to call less frequently?

So Kennison turned disappointedly away and retraced his steps to the hotel, and on his way there a spectre confronted him which it was hard to lay.

If Judge Willoughby had asked him not to call so often, would he be likely, then, to consent to a marriage between his darling Sibyl and a man whom he did not care to see frequently?

To this, Kennison could only answer that if Sibyl would consent to marry him, she could very probably bring the judge around to her way of thinking, for he was notoriously weak where his daughter was concerned.

In a distracted and wretched frame of mind Kennison returned to the hotel.

"Wait a second, Mr. Kennison; here is a letter for you," said the clerk, when he had called for his key and received it.

Gilbert glanced at the superscription on the envelope, and, not recognizing the handwriting, thrust it carelessly into his pocket.

When he had reached the room and seated himself comfortably, he remembered the note and drew it forth.

He opened it, and read:

SIR—There was one important thing I forgot to tell you. Durand has persuaded Judge Willoughby to almost shut his doors upon you, by telling the judge that you are the proprietor of a gambling place in New York. He has made this false statement in such a clever way, that it will be very hard for you to dissuade the judge from believing him.

For the love of Heaven destroy this the instant you have read it.

There was no signature, but it was written in a delicate feminine hand, and it did not tax even Kennison's very ordinary intellect to make up his mind that Madame d'Armettre was its author.

"Never disregard a lady's wishes," he observed, as he touched a lighted match to one corner of the perfumed sheet. He held it in his fingers until it was consumed, and then dropped it into the fireplace. The envelope then shared the fate of its late burden.

"Madame d'Armettre may rest easy; all trace of her duplicity is destroyed."

But regrets were of no use, and he had promised Dr. Massey to have done with violence.

Kennison, though an unusnally healthy man, felt no desire for sleep that night. He did not go to bed at all, but spent the night between walking the floor and lounging in an arm-chair. The number of cigars, cigarettes and pipes of tobacco which he consumed under those trying circumstances, would have rendered

his medical adviser—if he had had one—speechless with horror.

So much of a gentleman was Kennison, where women were concerned, that he gave no thought to himself until he had punctiliously regarded the Frenchwoman's wishes.

Then he clenched his fists and began to stride up and down the room.

"So that infernal scoundrel is the one who has turned Judge Willoughby against me. Told him I was proprietor of a gambling den. Curse the fellow! I owe myself an apology for not having broken every bone in his body that night I had the encounter with him."

Morning came at last, as it is bound to, even under the most trying circumstances. As early as he could Kennison had a dainty breakfast served in his rooms, but for once the skilful chef of the hotel failed to tempt his appetite.

He therefore had recourse to that dangerous nourishment of most men of the world—brandy and soda.

Sitting down to his desk, he seized a pen and wrote, in a hurried, almost illegible scrawl:

DEAR MASSEY—Please come as soon as you can. Utmost importance. KENNISON.

This he despatched by a messenger, whom he liberally rewarded in advance for promised haste, and then sat down to consume more tobacco and brandy to keep him quiet while waiting.

In considerably less than an hour, there was a knock at his door.

Kennison promptly opened it, and found Will Massey standing there.

"Come right in, Doc.; I was never so glad to see a man in my life as I am to see you."

Massey took a seat and Kennison sank into his own chair.

"I haven't slept a wink all night," said the latter, with a weary sigh.

"Neither have I," responded Will.

"What has kept you awake?" inquired Kennison, showing some surprise.

"Thinking over the unfortunate affair in which we are engaged," Will answered, quietly.

"The deuce! I didn't think it would affect you to that extent," returned Kennison.

"You have something important to consult me about," pursued Massey, coming to the point.

"Yes. I have discovered at last why Judge Willoughby has asked me to make my calls less frequent."

"Indeed! And have you traced it to Durand?"

"Yes."

"I'm afraid it was through his agency," said Will.

Kennison, without revealing his informant, told the substance of the information he had received.

"So you are a gambler?" commented Massey. "Seems incredible, doesn't it."

"It seems incredible to me because I know I am not," retorted Kennison, with considerable warmth.

"How do you imagine Durand got the judge to believe that without proof?" queried Massey.

"Oh! for the matter of that, the miserable villain is so clever that he is quite capable of producing positive proof of a thing that hasn't the least truth in it," Kennison replied with a groan. "And I assure you, Massey, that there isn't the least truth in the story.

I'm not a gambler, and never was. Never even played at a game of chance more than two or three times in my whole life."

"I don't doubt your statement in the least," returned Massey; "but it appears that Judge Willoughby gives it full credence. The main question is how to disabuse his mind of the belief."

"Oh, if you would be so good," said Kennison, eagerly. "Would it do any good if I were to tell you the exact extent of my expenditures, and the source and amount of my income?"

"It might, if you are minded to do so," Massey replied.

He took a sheet of paper and a pencil, and took down the figures and other data which Kennison gave him.

"I will find an opportunity as soon as feasible to lay this matter before Judge Willoughby," said Massey.

"All right, but do so as unostentatiously as you can, old man. Above all I don't want it to be known to anyone but you and myself that I have any informant. Durand might suspect, at once, who it was, and I couldn't bear the thought of that."

"I will do all I can, and with as much tact as possible," answered Will, feeling a generous sympathy even for the rival whom he feared would win the prize away from hm.

There being no further topic for discussion, Massey departed.

He reached the Willoughby mansion just in season to sit down to breakfast with the family.

Sibyl had come down, looking as cheerful and happy as usual, which Massey accepted as a hopeful sign.

The conversation of all at breakfast was lively and unconstrained, and one would certainly not have suspected that a terrible cloud hung over the spirits of two of that little party.

After breakfast Sibyl slipped away on Abdallah before Massey had time to see her.

He accordingly determined to apply his time to good advantage in seeking out the judge and presenting Kennison's denial.

With admirable tact the young physician drew the elder man out concerning his reasons for treating Kennison as he had.

Then, with equally admirable tact, Will succeeded in refuting the charge against Kennison, to the judge's satisfaction.

"I am afraid I have listened too readily to evil reports regarding the young man," said Willoughby. "I will go down to his hotel, after luncheon, and beg his pardon."

"I do not believe you will regret it," said Massey. "I am convinced from what I have seen of him that he is an excellent fellow, and your momentary hostility has caused him a good deal of pain."

"It is too bad," said the judge, heartily. "But never mind, Will. I'll make it up to him."

It must not be imagined that Will brought himself to clear the path for his rival without effort. It required just that kind of effort which a generous, noble man is always ready to force himself to make.

Sibyl returned in season for luncheon, and Will, determined not to lose the chance of speaking with her in the afternoon, begged her to drive him out in the dog-cart.

"I should be delighted to go," she answered, her face lighting up with genuine pleasure at the prospect of escaping her tormenting thoughts of Durand.

Poor Will Massey, modest man though he was, misunderstood the expression he saw. His pulses beat a little faster than usual at the thought that perhaps she was happy to go with him for his own sake.

Fay had the dog-cart harnessed and at the door in a short time after receiving the order.

"You will drive, of course, Doctor Massey," said Sibyl, as she got into the cart.

Will had not counted upon this—in fact he had given no thought to it. His practice in riding during the past few days had given him an increased confidence in himself, so he answered readily:

"Certainly, Miss Willoughby; I will drive, unless you prefer to."

"Oh, no, I think it much better for gentlemen to do the driving."

That settled it. Will took the reins and drove off, inwardly praying that the animal might develop no unexpected or troublesome tendencies.

"Where shall we go?" he asked.

"Oh, anywhere. It is all the same to me. I know every road hereabout by heart."

"Then you can act as guide, Miss Willoughby, if I lose myself in the intricacies of your roads."

Sibyl was silent most of the time. She wanted to converse with her companion, but she felt so full of gloomy forebodings that it was by an effort that she could force herself to answer in more than monosyllables.

As for Massey, there was only one subject he cared

to talk about, and he cast about for the best way to broach the subject.

"You have not been well for the last two or three days," he ventured, at last.

"No, my head has bothered me, and my spirits have not been of the happiest and most buoyant kind."

She gave vent to a weary oppressed sigh, which was in such contrast to her usually happy nature, that Will determined to plunge into the matter at once and solve it.

"In fact," he continued, "you have not felt altogether like yourself since Mr. Durand's hypnotic test."

"No, I haven't," she admitted, readily.

Her promptness in answering encouraged Dr. Massey to come more directly to the point.

"Pardon me for what I am going to say," he began, in a low voice, "but I fear your acquaintance with Durand has had disastrous consequences."

She gave a start, flushed and asked:

"What do you mean, Doctor Massey?"

Here was where Will needed all his tact in order to avoid offending her, thus defeating his own object.

"I mean," he began, slowly, "that yours is naturally a buoyant and an independent spirit. You were anxious to investigate hypnotism, and you seized the opportunity to do so. You then discovered that Mr. Durand could largely control your actions when he is present with you. But now, with your natural spirit of independence, you are frightened when you realize to what an unlimited extent this man can control you, if he is so minded. It has worried and fretted you into a state of acute bodily and mental illness. May I ask you if my diagnosis is not correct?"

"I'm afraid so," she answered, with a sigh.

"At the same time," Massey went on, briskly and cheerfully, "yours is a disease which is easily cured."

"Do you really think so?" she asked, eagerly.

"I haven't a doubt of it, Miss Willoughby."

"Are such cases familiar to medical men, then?"

"No-o, I can't say that; but then, your state of mind is very similar to cases we physicians are brought into contact with every day."

"If I could only believe it," Sibyl exclaimed, quickly.

"And why can't you believe it?"

"Because—but, Doctor Massey, I don't know how to speak as freely with you as I should like to."

"It ought to be easy, Miss Willoughby. You can certainly look upon me as your medical adviser, and, at the same time, your—your devoted friend."

"Thank you," she answered, more quietly than she had spoken before.

"You were going to say," he pursued, "that you thought your case unlike any other, because——"

"Because," she rejoined, after a moment's deliberation, "because the mental condition I find myself in is not in any way my own fault. I could not feel less depressed by doing anything in my power to do."

"You mean, as I understand it," put in Massey, "that you feel yourself controlled by some outside influence which you can do nothing to control?"

"Yes."

"And that influence is altogether due to Durand?"

"Yes."

"In other words, although you are not in a hypnotic trance, you nevertheless feel that he is exerting himself to keep you constantly under control?"

"You understand me," cried Sibyl, "and now you

comprehend why I am so depressed, and why I am unable to throw off that feeling. I am convinced that I have little or no volition left—that I am altogether controlled by Mr. Durand. Oh, Doctor Massey, it is a terrible feeling! It destroys all hope of happiness."

"And yet," replied Massey, assuming more cheerfulness than he really felt, "this influence which you so much dread is one that is easily shaken off if you only bring yourself to believe it. You are no longer in a trance brought about by Durand. Do not allow him to place you in one again; avoid him by taking refuge behind your friends, if necessary, and you will very soon realize what a bogus spectre you have conjured up for yourself. Rest assured that he can assume no further control over you if you do not consent to going into a trance."

"Oh, but he can, Doctor Massey," rejoined Sibyl, earnestly. "The trance is not at all necessary. Whenever he is near me, I realize that he can control me without apparent effort. I have no will-power of my own in his presence."

"How do you know this?" asked Massey, gravely. "Has he really exerted this control over you at any time since the demonstration in the library?"

The horse was walking, now, through a shaded part of the road.

Sibyl was about to answer, when she looked up and perceived Calvin Durand standing beside a tree within six feet of her.

The cold, steely, malignant look in his eyes seemed to freeze the blood in her veins. She was incapable of making any response to Massey—she felt that she had not even the power of speech.

CHAPTER XI.

A WARNING FOR TWO.

SIBYL'S countenance would have betrayed her, even if Durand had not heard enough to satisfy him of the tenor of the conversation.

The poor girl's face showed all the fluctuating phases of alarm when she realized that he was so near.

And Durand stood gazing at her with that calm, ironical smile of his, his very look seeming to dare her to attempt the rebellion that was beyond her powers.

As for Massey, his usually peaceful disposition was for once greatly altered. He was tempted, for a brief instant, to seize the whip from its socket, jump out and lay it soundly about Durand's shoulders.

But another instant's reflection showed him the folly of such a move. In a contest with an intellectual man it is seldom that violence is profitable.

All this took place in a few seconds.

Then Durand lifted his hat with well-simulated courtesy and said:

"I am delighted to meet you again, Miss Willoughby. You, also, Doctor Massey."

Will lifted his hat in acknowledgment, saying:

"I am surprised to see you so soon. I understood that you had gone away, to be gone some little time."

"It was a matter of business," Durand answered. "I disposed of it sooner than I hoped to. That accounts for my early return to idleness."

"Don't you find the place dull, after Boston?" Massey ventured, at random.

"I have only been here a few minutes," returned Durand, with an easy laugh, "so I am not exactly weary yet. I am on the way from the depot. By the way, Miss Willoughby, you haven't yet said that you were glad to see me back. You are, I hope."

Sibyl tried not to look at him, but under his keen, persistent gaze she could not keep her eyes from him.

She looked at him timidly and answered:

"Why, yes, I am certainly glad to know that you have returned. You—you are looking much better for —for your little trip."

"Thank you. And now I have a little favor to ask of you, Miss Willoughby. It is a long walk to the village. Can't you induce Doctor Massey to take me up on the rear seat, and give me a lift as far as your home? You are going in that direction, I take it."

"Yes," she answered, in an irresolute way, "we are going home."

And Massey, seeing there was no help for it, added:

"Make yourself at home, on the rear seat, Mr. Durand."

"Thank you."

Durand jumped up, sat with his back to Massey's, and rested his eyes on the pale, shrinking Sibyl.

"You do not look well," he said.

"I have not been well for the last few days," she admitted.

Massey added:

"She is suffering from nervous troubles—a form of hysteria, I think. I am going to ask her to keep by

herself for the next few days in hopes of a speedy recovery."

"Is that the usual treatment in such cases?" queried Durand, gravely.

"The treatment differs: there is no established rule," answered Dr. Massey.

"While I pretend to no medical knowledge," said Durand, "it would seem to me that the best remedy for nervous troubles would be quiet, even, sunny life —no undue excitement, and, just as emphatically, no seclusion. Isn't that the usual advice, doctor?"

Will was determined not to be vanquished by this man, and accordingly responded:

"As I have already said, there is no established rule. In Miss Willoughby's case it certainly seems to me best that she should seclude herself for a while."

"May I ask why?"

"Because, in the last two or three days, she has manifested a great aversion to seeing any one."

"Then to affect a cure would it not be best to advise her to overcome this tendency? That, in itself, might be a cure?"

Will's reasoning, though specious, now triumphed.

"No," he answered promptly, "it is never best to urge nervous patients to do that which all their inclinations cry out against. Nervous people should have their whims gratified, rather than opposed."

Durand realized, as well as Massey did, that a shrewd game was being played. And it did not suit him to combat with the doctor on purely medical topics.

"I can congratulate Miss Willoughby upon having a very clever physician," he said. There was a sneer in

his tone, but it was so well cloaked that Massey could not openly show offence.

Will now became aware of the fact that Durand, by his keen gaze, was endeavoring to disconcert Sibyl. The Willoughby house could now be seen, less than half a mile away, and Massey whipped up the horse, that the distance might be quickly covered.

As they drew near to the house, Durand inquired, in his blandest way:

"May I stop a few minutes, and pay my respects to Judge Willoughby? I trust that he will be glad to see me."

"Judge Willoughby is away this afternoon," interposed Will, before Sibyl found chance to reply.

"I venture to hope, then," persisted Durand, "that Miss Willoughby will be pleased to entertain me a little while."

Here, again, Massey interposed.

"No," he said authoritatively; "I am sorry, but I must insist that Miss Willoughby seek the quiet of her room as soon as she reaches the house. As her physician, I feel it necessary to insist upon this."

Durand felt that he was balked for the time being, and this consciousness made him ugly and dangerous.

From behind Massey's back he glared at her so that she felt piteously weak with terror.

But, in answer to Massey, he said:

"I bow to your superior wisdom, Doctor."

The dog-cart now turned in through the Willoughby gates, and went rolling up the long driveway at a lively gait, halting before the door.

Before Massey had had time to lay the reins down, Durand leaped to the ground

"Let me assist you to alight, Miss Willoughby," said he, extending his hands.

Sibyl placed a little, trembling hand in his, and looked piteously at him, but read no pity in his eyes.

She started to step down from the cart, but would have fallen, had Durand not caught her adroitly in his arms.

"Jump in, and I will drive you to your hotel," said Massey.

"In a moment, sir."

Durand led Sibyl up the broad steps, saying, in a low tone:

"Do not breathe one word of our secret to that fellow, or to any one else, or you and yours shall know no happiness in this life. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she answered, faintly.

"Will you obey me?"

"Yes," came tremblingly but unhesitatingly from her lips.

"Look at me," he continued, seizing her arm as soon as they had disappeared from view into the vestibule.

She glanced timidly into his face, and shrank cowerингly back from the fierce, malignant eyes glaring into her own.

"Do you think I can be disobeyed with impunity?" he hissed.

"No!" she cried, covering her face with her hands and sobbing low.

"Listen to me, Sibyl," he whispered in her ear. "Do as I wish you to at all times, and I will do my best to make you happy. Disregard me, disobey me, and you will wish yourself dead many times over. Had I not come upon you just as I did, you would have confided in that

fellow Massey. If you had done so, it would have been the most terrible mistake you could have made. If I am defied, I am absolutely relentless. Remember, I will have no trifling. I must go now, but I will come again soon. Good-by, darling," he added, in a gentler tone.

Before Sibyl could divine his intention, he bent over her and kissed her.

This liberty would have been promptly resented had any other man attempted it with as little warrant.

But with Durand Sibyl felt herself incapable of resistance. She submitted, shudderingly; and, as he turned and went out, she fled sobbing to her room.

There was a complete outward change in Calvin Durand as he came out of the house and descended the steps.

Dr. Massey, with a lowering visage, was waiting impatiently for his coming.

"I took advantage of the opportunity to say a few words to Miss Willoughby," said Durand, in a tone of easy explanation.

"So I imagined," Will returned, drily.

Durand jumped in, took a seat beside Massey, and the dog-cart rumbled away.

When they came out upon the road a sudden change came over Durand.

"Massey," he said, suddenly, "you are playing a queer game with me."

"You will have to explain yourself," Will returned, coldly.

"Very well, Doctor, I will do so. Here I am paying attention to Miss Willoughby. You perceive the fact and you immediately throw all possible obstacles in my way. Do I make myself clear?"

"Not very."

"This afternoon, Massey, it was only because you could not well refuse, that you consented to take me up in the dog-cart. Then, when I proposed stopping at the house for a few moments, you interfered again—as a physician—and told me you had prescribed absolute quiet for Sibyl."

"Miss Willoughby, if you please," corrected Massey.

"I waive the point," returned Durand. "The fact remains the same that you ordered seclusion for her, meaning by that nothing in the world but seclusion from me."

"I decline to discuss my acts as a physician," returned Massey, frigidly.

"Decline or not, as you please, my dear fellow, you and I both know that my statement of the case is correct. As I said, you are playing a queer game, and I warn you that it is a desperately dangerous one, at the same time."

Massey looked his companion contemptuously full in the face.

Durand returned the look with interest, and Will was obliged to turn his own gaze from the steady glare of the other's eyes.

"I am not a man to be trifled with," Durand went on, calmly. "I do not fear that any of your stratagems will win Miss Willoughby's affections from me, but nevertheless you annoy and inconvenience me by them. You are a rival of mine, I make no doubt, but such contemptible measures as you are taking will not defeat me. They will only hinder me, and make your own discomfiture the greater in the end."

"Go on," urged Massey, coolly. "You amuse me."

"Do I?" pursued Durand, calmly. "I presume I might be amused by your efforts to keep Miss Willoughby and myself apart. But I am not. I warn you, Doctor, that if you persist in it, it will be greatly to your own disadvantage."

"I won't trouble you to explain that remark," retorted Will.

"I feel under no obligation to explain myself," Durand continued. "What I have told you is alluded to only for the purpose of saving us both trouble. I am an older man than you are, Doctor. While you are probably just out of college, I have spent a score of years in studying and observing all kinds and conditions of people. At my age I am not to be defeated by a boy's stratagems, even though that boy does boast the degree and the power of an M. D. Now, remember, Massey, that any further antics on your part will be treated by me as such conduct deserves to be treated. All honorable rivalry, if you wish; but have done with thin, boyish subterfuges."

Will laughed softly at this lengthy warning, but if Durand felt enraged by the other's levity, his grave, calm face did not betray the fact.

In a few minutes they drew up before the hotel and Durand alighted.

There being no one else within earshot, Durand said:

"Bear in mind, Massey, if you are my rival, press your own suit by all honorable means, but don't let me encounter any more of your presumptuous stratagems. Will you shake hands on it as a bargain?"

"There is no need to," Will returned, doffing his hat lightly, and giving the word to the horse.

As the dog-cart rumbled out of sight, Durand stood

on the sidewalk looking after its occupant with a calm, contemptuous smile that was decidedly cynical in its aspect.

Meanwhile Will, as he drove slowly back, reflected upon Durand's words.

"He is trying the same game with me that he did with Kennison. He tries to make me feel that I am altogether in the wrong and that in him I have to deal with a gravely upright man who will brook nothing that is mean or sneaking. Durand, I imagine, preserves that air through life, and does it so successfully, too, that few people ever suspect his true nature."

Will drove slowly home, turned the rig over to Fay, and went into the house. Ever since the day of the hypnotic test, the library had possessed a stronger fascination for Sibyl than even she was aware of. But Massey had observed the fact. He went there in search of her.

The library was empty. Will went in, however, and taking up a book, sat down to wait.

Barely a quarter of an hour had passed when Sibyl entered, but she did not perceive Massey, who was ensconced in an out-of-the-way niche.

He was startled at the appearance she presented. Her face appeared drawn and haggard, and showed signs of great suffering. She seemed apathetic, and moved like one in a trance.

She took a book at random from one of the shelves, opened it, and sat down by a window, but did not read. Instead, her eyes wandered dreamily over the landscape, and she seemed utterly insensible to her immediate surroundings.

Now Massey realized, with far greater force than be-

fore, how completely she was dominated by Durand. Though she had seen him for only a few minutes, she appeared to have lost her own individuality, and everything but Durand's controlling influence was a blank to her.

Fearing to frighten her by accosting her too suddenly, Massey tip-toed unperceived to the door, opened and shut it, and then advanced as if he had just entered the room.

"Oh, you are here, too, Miss Willoughby," he said, cheerily, as he approached her. "I am glad of that, as I want very much to ask you to continue what you were telling me this afternoon. And very likely, after seeing Mr. Durand, you have still more that you can tell me."

Sibyl gazed at him with a vacuous look at first, but, as he went on, she seemed to Massey to awake more to the present.

"No, no," she returned, hastily; "I have nothing to say on that head, Doctor Massey."

"But you promised to let me aid you," he urged, "and I cannot do much if there is to be any reserve between us."

"I know I said something to you about it," she answered, "but I was foolish. Please forget what I said, and do not let us recur to it."

"But—" he began.

"No, no, Doctor Massey, please let us not discuss it at all. Pardon me, but I shall think it good of you if you will leave me now."

Will gazed at her in astonishment; but, seeing that she meant it, bowed and left the room.

"This is getting serious," he muttered. "She is

getting more and more helplessly in Durand's control every time she sees him. The affair is getting so serious that I dislike to do anything without ample authority. The judge must know of this, and he and I must work together."

Massey started at once in search of Judge Willoughby.

CHAPTER XII.

MASSEY DETERMINES TO "GO IT ALONE."

MEETING one of the servants in the hall, Massey inquired:

"Where is Judge Willoughby?"

"Don't know, sir; hasn't returned yet."

There was nothing for Massey to do but to go to his room, since he did not think it best to go to Sibyl again for the present.

So he went up into his own apartment, got into his dressing-gown, lit a huge student-pipe, and "put his thinking-cap" on.

It was plain to him that it was high time to do something, and to do that something promptly and resolutely.

Suddenly an idea occurred to him.

He jumped up, ran to a table, and penned this despatch to a Boston publishing house:

Send me a copy of every work you have or can procure on the subject of hypnotism. Forward by earliest express.

Then he rang the bell.

"Send Fay, the coachman, here to me," he desired of the servant who answered.

In a few minutes there came a knock at the door, and Fay entered.

"Michael, have you time to take one of the horses, and go on an errand for me?"

"Yis, yer honor."

"Then I wish you would go to the telegraph office as quickly as you can, and send this for me. Keep the change for your trouble."

"Yis, yer honor. Thank ye, yer honor."

Michael hurriedly departed, stowing the despatch and the five dollar bill away in one of his pockets.

Then Massey resumed his pipe and his thinking.

"Perhaps, after all, I'd better say nothing to the judge just yet," he decided. "By this time to-morrow I may have a better plan on hand."

There was a rap at the door.

"Come in."

The door opened, and a servant said:

"Judge Willoughby would like to see you in the library, sir, if you can spare him a few moments."

"Tell him I will come down at once."

While he was getting out of his dressing-gown and into a coat, Will once more deliberated whether or not he would tell the judge anything.

"On the whole, I think I'd better not," he reflected. "The judge is a bluff man of action, and might do something rash or unfortunate. I'll be careful what I say to him, at all events."

The judge was standing at one of the windows in the library, with his hands thrust into his pockets, and a look of great anxiety on his usually jolly face. Sibyl was not present.

"Massey, my dear fellow, I want to speak with you about my daughter."

"So I imagined," answered Will, as he and the judge took seats.

"Then you have noticed how indisposed she is of late?" queried the judge.

"I have no means, of course, of knowing Miss Willoughby's normal spirits and health, but it had struck me that she is not as well as she should be of late," Will answered.

"To what do you attribute this change?" demanded the judge.

"Nervousness."

"All very well, my dear fellow, but nervousness is a mere trifle. I'm sometimes nervous myself, but it doesn't make a total change in me."

"On the contrary, Judge Willoughby, nervousness is not a trifle. It is more torturing with some people than aches and pains."

"But what should bring Sibyl to such a condition? She is out doors much of the time, and lives regularly and healthily. I never saw my little girl at such a low pitch before, and I am afraid the worry of it is demoralizing me."

The judge's softened and choked tones bore witness to the truth of his statement.

Massey, who loved Sibyl too, could understand and sympathize with him.

"I can give you an explanation," he said, slowly, "but it is such an extraordinary one that I fear you will not credit it."

"I'll believe anything you tell me, my boy. Go ahead."

"You remember the test, judge?"

"Durand's hypnotic test, you mean? Yes. What of it?"

"I lay the whole of Miss Willoughby's trouble to that, and to the effects of it."

"You astonish me, my dear fellow, but go on."

"You will remember," Massey continued, "that Miss Willoughby went easily into a hypnotic trance, and that, once in it, she readily obeyed Durand in everything he told her to do."

"I remember."

"And is not your daughter a trifle independent and self-willed?"

"Not too much so, but she certainly possesses that characteristic to some degree."

"Exactly," pursued Massey, "and, though she may not be conscious of it herself, it has fretted her inconceivably to find that another person can control her at will. It affects her every time Durand comes near her. This afternoon he met her while she was in my company, and from that moment she has not been herself."

"Do you believe, Massey, that Durand is intentionally causing this trouble?" cried the judge, excitedly.

"Not necessarily," Massey prevaricated, knowing it was essential to keep his host calm.

"If I believed that fellow was at the bottom of it," Willoughby went on, "I would horsewhip him on sight, and order my men to throw him out into the street every time he showed his nose here."

For a few moments Massey wondered whether this mode of treatment would prove an effectual damper on Durand. But he decided that it would not. If violence were the defence adopted, Durand was clever enough to devise a scheme for outwitting them both. And in general, Massey believed that force was always

a bad weapon to use with intellectual foes. So he answered:

"Judge, you are a magistrate. The course you propose would be in violation of the very laws you are expected to uphold. Besides, you have not the slightest reason to suppose that Mr. Durand is consciously responsible for what has happened. I feel sure that he has always impressed you as being a gentleman."

"Yes, he has," Willoughby admitted.

"Then, sir, it would be foolish, would it not, to beat him, as you proposed?"

"I fear in my indignation I was too hasty," said the judge.

"I can advise you of a much better method," continued Massey, who had been doing some rapid thinking in the last few minutes.

"Let me have it, my dear fellow."

"Well, then, I believe that Durand is the cause of Miss Willoughby's indisposition, though I do not say that he is willingly or intentionally so. I would suggest that your daughter be obliged to keep to her room for the next few days. Allow her to see no visitors, and especially, do not let Durand go near her. Tell him that she is unable to see any visitors.

"At the same time," Will added, after a moment's thought, "do not tell him that this is my advice, and do not let your daughter know it either. You will have to shoulder this advice as your own. But I warn you, Judge, that if you do not keep Durand altogether away from her for a week or two, she will grow steadily worse, instead of better."

"I'll watch over her myself like a dragon," muttered Judge Willoughby.

"I told you that my explanation would astonish you," said Will. "Has it not?"

"I am astonished, but I do not hesitate to believe your explanation. The more I think of it, the more apparent the truth of your theory is. Massey, my dear fellow, you are a clever physician. I put Sibyl unreservedly in your hands for treatment."

"I accept the trust," said Will, gravely, "but I must do it on condition that Miss Willoughby does not see my hand in this affair. She must not know that I have interdicted her seeing a certain acquaintance of hers. If she does, the good effect of the proposed treatment will not appear."

"I understand you thoroughly," said the judge. He thought he did, but he didn't. "Do you think it best to give her medicine?"

"We must give her a little harmless stuff," Will answered, "or we may not be able to persuade her that she is ill enough to have to keep to her room."

"Send the medicine to me and I will see that she takes it," said the judge.

Massey returned to his room feeling that he had handled the difficult affair with considerable tact, and that he had at least obtained time in which to formulate a plan of campaign against Durand.

Sibyl protested, but the judge carried out his part with tact and with surprising firmness.

In her enforced rôle of invalid, Sibyl did not appear at dinner, but a tray loaded with delicacies was sent to her room.

The judge's sister, the elder Miss Willoughby, was very anxious about "the child's" health, and pumped Massey persistently regarding the nature of her malady.

She seemed but illy satisfied with the statement that it was nervousness, and nothing more.

The plan for Sibyl's sequestration was rigidly enforced.

Two or three of her more intimate friends of her own sex were allowed to see her, but no other callers were admitted, and she did not leave her room.

On the following afternoon a heavy express package came for Dr. Massey. Shutting himself up in his room, he refused himself to all, even Kennison, who called once, and applied himself regularly to the books on hypnotism.

For two or three days he read, to the exclusion of exercise, and almost of sleep, smoking such enormous quantities of tobacco that he became highly nervous.

At the end of his course of reading, he felt that he had a good theoretical knowledge of hypnotism, but he did not find, in any of the volumes, a plan for dispelling the hypnotic influences of another. It was a phase of the subject which had not presented itself to the authors.

Durand called every day, but did not succeed in seeing Sibyl, being told, every time he presented himself, that Miss Sibyl was still confined to her room and unable to see any one.

"Do you know who the physician is?" he asked, when he had called on the fourth day, and had been refused, as usual.

"No, sir," was the discreet servant's reply.

Durand drew from his pocket a notebook, pencilled a few lines on a leaf and enclosed it in an envelope, which he directed to Sibyl.

Handing the servant the note, and a dollar at the

same time, he requested that the former be delivered at once.

But Massey was on the alert. From the hallway above he overheard it all. With a bribe doubly as large as Durand's, he made himself the possessor of the note, on terms of strict confidence.

The note read:

I must see you when I call to-morrow. This will not do. Do not presume too far. DURAND.

"Curse the fellow!" muttered Will, when he had read the note and destroyed it. "We must be very vigilant, or he will see her in spite of us, and the good work is undone."

When Durand called the next day he found himself still refused, though the servant stoutly persisted that she had given the note into Miss Sibyl's own hands.

He went away, grinding his teeth with rage.

For a week Sibyl was kept from him, and the judge noted, with vast satisfaction, that she was slowly but surely improving in health and spirits.

During all this time Massey kept himself, by an herculean effort, from Sibyl's presence, for he believed that she suspected his interference, and he did not care to be questioned.

One afternoon Massey went out for a short stroll, and he had not gone far before he found himself face to face with Calvin Durand.

The situation was a lonely one, and Will did not altogether like the ugly expression on the other's face.

"I want to see you," began Durand. "I have been waiting for this opportunity.

"Indeed?" returned Will, striving to appear uncon-

cerned, though he realized that he had need to keep on his guard.

"Yes, I want to see you," Durand went on. "You have been playing boyish tricks on me again. You must stop it."

"If you talk in this vein, look out that you are not committed for a lunatic," Will retorted.

A fiendish expression came into Durand's face.

"You would like to do that for me, wouldn't you?" he sneered.

"Yes," Massey answered, very promptly, wondering whether he could hold this fear over Durand's head. "And there is a certain judge, who, if he knew all, would sign the necessary papers."

"Bah! bah! More boyish tricks," retorted Durand, angrily. "I don't doubt you'd try it, though, if you dared."

"I may be tempted to some day," Will returned, coolly.

Durand clutched fiercely at his arm, and the glare in his eyes certainly seemed maniacal.

Will felt that the other was trying to gain control over him, and, fearful of the result, he shook off Durand's hand and turned to walk away.

It was cowardly, but he didn't care to run the risk of letting Durand gain ascendency over him.

"So you are afraid to face the man you have tried to injure?"

"Not at all," returned Will coolly enough, now that the other could not compel his gaze.

Durand sprang after him, and seized him again, but Will adroitly tripped his adversary and Durand found himself on his back in the dusty country road.

Then Will turned and walked away.

Durand, feeling that he was bound to get the worst of it, if he persisted, arose and made up his mind to defer vengeance to a more fitting time.

The closest vigilance sometimes fails.

Sibyl, finding herself alone that evening, while dinner was in progress below, slipped into the drawing-room.

Tired of her long confinement, she was glad to sit down to the piano, playing softly.

Calvin Durand approached the house while she was playing.

The door was open and he entered, going directly to the drawing-room.

Sibyl, hearing a step behind her, turned.

She saw Durand in the dusk and started to her feet, uttering a little cry. He sprang forward in season to silence her.

"Sit down," he commanded, leading her to a chair and taking another seat beside her.

Sibyl obeyed, and turned her terrified eyes to his, seeking to bear up under that keen gaze.

"So you have tried to keep me from you," he said, in a low tone that was full of menace. "I warned you not to do it, and you must take the consequences of disobeying me."

Sibyl tried to answer him boldly, but her eyes again encountered Durand's terrible gaze, and speech failed her.

CHAPTER XIII.

A USELESS DEFIANCE.

DURAND walked softly to the door and peered into the hall-way. No one else appeared to be about. He closed the door and came back to Sibyl.

She alone will ever know the terrible struggle that was taking place within her. She had determined, once and for all, to end her thraldom to this unprincipled scoundrel who, so far, had only to look at her and force her to tremblingly obey.

Sibyl stood with her hand at the bell-rope.

Durand took a seat near her, not noticing, or affecting not to notice, her position.

"Do you remember what I said to you the last time we met?" he asked, coldly.

"Perfectly, Mr. Durand."

"I warned you that you must not refuse to see me. If you did, it would be worse for you. Do you not remember my saying this to you?"

"I do, Mr. Durand. You were quite as discourteous and ignoble then as you are at the present moment."

She expected he would fly into a passion at this, but he did not. He felt that he could take his time.

"I have called several times in the last few days," Durand went on. "Each time I have been refused. They told me you were confined to your room by illness, and unable to see anyone. It was a lie, was it not?"

"No, it was the truth."

Durand surveyed her keenly for a moment. Then he decided to accept her statement.

"Very well, then, we will admit that you were ill. Was that any reason for refusing to see me?"

"I did not refuse," Sibyl answered.

"Oh, but you did."

"I did not," Sibyl repeated, decisively.

"Well, let us see. You received my note, yet you did not order me admitted when I came again."

"I did not know that you called," said Sibyl. "I certainly received no note from you."

"I left it with a servant, who informed me that she gave it into your hands."

"Then you have been deceived, Mr. Durand. I repeat that I have received no note from you."

"Are you telling me the truth?" he demanded, with deliberate insolence.

Sibyl had been trying to arouse herself all along. Helped by Durand's intolerable behavior, she had at last succeeded.

"Mr. Durand," she returned, coolly and incisively, "you are at this moment under my father's roof. You have called here in the guise of a gentleman, and now you take advantage of our being alone to insult me grossly. I demand, sir, that you quit the house at once."

Even now Durand did not seem angry.

"Indeed?" he demanded, placidly.

"I demand that you leave," Sibyl went on, desperately. "If you do not go at once I shall ring for help and your exit may not be as dignified as you would wish."

"May I ask the reason of all this?" Durand asked, quietly.

Sibyl, who began to feel that her own strength of will was increasing with every defiant word she uttered, did not hesitate to reply:

"You came to this house, sir, as a guest. As far as I know you never have had the least cause to complain that either my father or myself have treated you otherwise than as a guest should be treated. One day you attempted a little experiment in the library, and you were delighted to find that you could control me while in a trance.

"Since then, sir, you have tried to repeat this control, and you know how well you succeeded. In your hands I was utterly helpless; so much so, in fact, that it would have been useless and silly for me to have attempted to place myself under the protection of my friends.

"But, Mr. Durand, there was one thing you did not count upon. Your influence has worn off. I no longer feel it. I admit that I fear you, as a woman may fear any desperate scoundrel, but I am no longer under your control. My own will has asserted itself, and you can no longer laugh in my face and tell me that you are my master. Go, sir; and never presume to show your face here again. If you do, I warn you that my father's temper will ensure you no gentle reception. Now go!"

Sibyl stood with one hand on the bell-rope. The other she pointed toward the door. Her bosom heaved, and her eyes flashed with a tempest of wrath.

Durand had regarded her calmly and attentively throughout her long harangue, and now continued to

stare at her without answering a word. Neither did he make any move to go.

"Come, sir, I can tolerate you no longer," Sibyl resumed, after a moment's pause. "If you do not go at ouce I shall ring for help."

But Durand continued gazing at her without answering.

"Are you going?" she insisted.

"Not yet, Sibyl. I have much to say to you," he answered.

Sibyl clutched at the rope and gave it a vigorous pull.

"We shall see whether you will go," she said, struggling to appear calm.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Durand, rising to his feet and stepping to her side. He did not appear at all angry.

Nevertheless, Sibyl recoiled.

Stand back, sir, or I shall shout for help."

"No, no; please don't," he urged, gently.

Lifting his hands, he passed them before her face, and then touched her forehead lightly with his soft finger tips.

Almost instantly, though she made a short struggle, Sibyl passed into a trance.

Durand surveyed her with a look of evil joy.

"When the servant comes say you did not ring—that it must have been a mistake," he whispered.

He had not more than spoken, when a knock was heard at the door.

Durand glided to a corner of the room where he was not likely to be seen in the dusk, while Sibyl moved toward the door.

"Did you ring, Miss Sibyl?" asked the maid, who stood without.

Sibyl hesitated a moment.

Her will was evidently making a strong effort to assert itself.

Durand watched her—anxiously, for once.

The struggle was a brief one. Sibyl could not throw off the influence that was more powerful than her own will.

"No—o, I did not ring," she answered, slowly.

"But, Miss Sibyl, the drawing-room bell rang in the servants' hall. I know it, miss, for I sat there and saw it."

"It—it must have been a mistake," Sibyl answered, slowly and painfully.

"Very well, miss," and the puzzled maid departed.

Durand glided from the corner where he had found concealment, and closed the door.

Without a word, he led Sibyl to a sofa, and drew up a chair on which he seated himself.

He clapped his hands suddenly before her face, and Sibyl, with a start, seemed to recover herself.

She heard Durand laughing softly, and shivered.

"Do you remember what has just happened?" he interrogated.

"I—I—a servant came to the door, did she not?" Sibyl asked, slowly.

"Yes, and you, obedient to my instructions, told her that you did not ring—that it must have been a mistake."

"I remember now," Sibyl answered, and shuddered again.

"So you see, my headstrong little girl, that I am still your master. I let you rant, a few moments ago, because it amused me. You thought yourself strong

again. But you did not know my strength. Do you feel like defying me now?"

He leaned forward, and as he did so she shrank back.

"No," she faltered, and began to cry softly.

"That is right, little one," said Durand, approvingly. "Never again attempt to defy me. It must be doubly humiliating to you to think you have succeeded and then to discover that you have not—that it was all a farce permitted and encouraged by me."

Sibyl certainly looked humiliated. She regarded him with tearful eyes, and at last faltered out:

"Mr. Durand, why do you persecute me so? Surely you can have no other object than to amuse yourself. Are you not sufficiently amused? Can you not go away now and leave me forever?"

"Go away? Oh, no, indeed: I assure you that I have not been doing this for nothing. I have an object. Can you not guess what it is?"

Sibyl shook her head.

"Very well, then, little girl, I will tell you. In my forty odd years of life I have not met a woman who had the good or bad fortune to please me as you do. I intend to marry you."

"Marry me?" Sibyl repeated, shudderingly. "Oh, no, no, it cannot be."

"May I ask why, little one?"

Sibyl shook herself and endeavored to gain her self-control.

"Because I do not love you and never could," she said, slowly and distinctly. "I loathe you as I would a snake. You"—shuddering violently—"you impress me exactly as a snake does."

Durand possessed admirable self-control. He did not get angry even at this discomposing statement.

"It is rarely that husband and wife love each other," he answered, calmly. "One loves and the other submits to it."

"I could not even submit to it," she cried, desperately. "I cannot tolerate your presence. It grows more hateful to me every day."

"Unfortunately you will have to submit to it," he rejoined, composedly. "Tell me, Sibyl, do you think you could disobey me if I bade you to follow me to a clergyman's house within an hour?"

He peered into her eyes, and she was shrinkingly silent.

"You have not answered me," he said, after a moment's pause. "Tell me, do you think you could disobey me?"

"No," she admitted.

"Then do not try to."

But Durand's calm insolence had again aroused Sibyl. She heard steps coming along the hall.

"Some one is coming," she said, hurriedly. "I shall appeal for help. Once free of you, I can keep so."

"Oh, no, you can't. And don't dare to ask for help. It will be far worse for you if you do."

He looked at her so significantly—and angrily, now—that Sibyl felt her sudden resolution deserting her.

The door opened and Dr. Massey looked in.

"Oh, you are here, Miss Willoughby," said the latter, coming into the room. "Your father is looking for you."

Without saying more Massey lit one of the hanging

lamps and turned around to survey Durand with a look that was anything but friendly.

Durand returned the gaze with no more friendliness.

There was an awkward pause.

Sibyl would gladly have left the room, but felt herself incapable of doing so.

Durand's looks plainly intimated that he considered Massey an intruder, but the latter did not trouble himself to accept the hint.

"How did the fellow get in here?" wondered Will.

Aloud, after a pause, he said:

"I hardly expected to meet you here, Mr. Durand, and I didn't hear you announced. The servant said Miss Willoughby was alone in the drawing-room."

"There," muttered Will to himself, "that's a strong enough hint for any man. I hope he'll take it."

But Durand was as obtuse to hints as his rival had been. He displayed no intention of going.

"As I called to see Miss Willoughby, by appointment," said Durand, "I did not think it necessary to announce myself to anyone else."

Will looked quickly to Sibyl, but she did not seem inclined to deny that there had been an appointment.

The thrust told upon Will. He was more than half inclined to believe it, and it troubled him greatly to think that Durand had so far gained the mastery.

Both men tried the same device. Each determined to outstay the other.

For an hour both adhered rigidly to this purpose. But, as Massey showed no intention of leaving the room, Durand finally decided that he was wasting his time and arose to go.

"I will say au revoir, now, Miss Willoughby. May

I hope to see you, if I call some time to-morrow afternoon?"

Massey interposed:

"Miss Willoughby's health is not yet such that she can safely receive visitors. It is her father's wish, and my advice as her physician, that she refuse all callers for the present."

Durand bowed stiffly to Will.

"Pardon me, sir, but I addressed my question to Miss Willoughby. I shall prefer to receive my answer from her."

Sibyl longed to say "No," but she had so lately felt Durand's mastery that she did not dare to again provoke it. So she gave a reluctant "Yes."

Durand bowed formally to Sibyl, and saluted the young doctor ironically.

"I will see you, then, to-morrow, Miss Willoughby. Until then, adieu."

In a moment more he was gone.

Sibyl arose to leave the room abruptly, but Massey intercepted her.

"Pardon me," he said, "but am I right in supposing that you did not, of your own free will, make that appointment for to-morrow?"

"Why not?" she asked, appearing surprised.

"Because I fear that man has such a strong influence over you that you have no volition of your own in his presence. And, believe me, Miss Willoughby, both as a physician and as a friend, I have a strong interest in relieving you from him. Will you assist me by talking frankly with me?"

"I wish to talk with no one," Sibyl answered, her

voice trembling. "I am very miserable, and a remedy is within the power of no one."

Will would have answered and protested, but she ran past him and fled up-stairs.

There was nothing for him to do but to go to his own room and give himself up to gloomy reflections.

The first thing he did was to call in his inseparable companions of late in the books on hypnotism.

But he studied them in vain that night. No tangible plan presented itself for permanently releasing Sibyl Willoughby from the dread influence that make her life bitter indeed.

He put the books down and gave himself up anew to reflection.

Suddenly Massey arose and began to pace up and down the room.

"I wonder if I could succeed that way," he mused, excitedly. "If I could induce Sibyl to marry me I should have the right to protect her. I could do it, too, if the dear girl were once my wife. I'll propose to her to-morrow, before Durand comes, and may heaven be kind to me in this crisis of my life!"

Massey paced the floor until late in the night. At last he got into bed and lay down to dream feverish dreams of the morrow.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PROPOSAL ON HORSEBACK.

When the average man determines to learn his fate in the morning, his slumber is not as serene and peaceful as usual.

Dr. Willard Massey was more than an average young man, in many respects, but he was no exception to this rule.

He slept not more than twenty minutes at a time, and had long waking intervals.

When he did sleep, it was worse than lying awake, for disheartening dreams presaged defeat on the morrow Calvin Durand's face, a thousand times more terrible than in reality, haunted Will all night long. He was repeatedly making weak and ineffectual efforts to rescue Sibyl from the dread monster, efforts which Sibyl herself did not appear to appreciate or to be grateful for.

It is no wonder, then, that Will Massey arose much earlier than was his wont.

He arose so early, in fact, that he was obliged to while away a few hours before he could descend to breakfast.

In this extremity he had recourse again to his inseparable companions, the books on hypnotism.

But if he had read to no purpose before, it was inconceivably worse now. The more he read on this fateful morning the more hopelessly bewildered he became. Never before had those books appeared so ab-

surd to him, so filled with impossibilities and contradictions.

At last, more wearied by his reading than he had been even by his dreams, he threw the books irritably aside and paced the room with his hands clenched tightly behind his back.

Going, at last, to the window, he pushed the curtain aside and peered out. Even his distracted mind realized that the early morning was gorgeously glorious.

"A walk, I suppose, will do me good," he muttered.

In a few minutes he was properly attired and sauntered out of the house.

A little way down the road a pretty country lane spread before him. Will turned into the lane and walked briskly along for a few minutes. But, in his irritably nervous state of mind the glory of the morning soon palled on him, and he turned disconsolately homeward.

Going to his room again, Massey shaved himself with more care than he remembered ever to have done before, and parted and brushed his hair with finical nicety. He polished his boots, brushed his clothes, and otherwise gave the greatest attention to his appearance.

Men are often careless about their attire at most times, but it is safe to say that no thoughtful man ever yet went into his mistress' presence, with the all-important words trembling on his lips, until he had put himself in the most presentable condition possible.

Young women, on the other hand, are equally careful of their appearance at all times when they expect to meet others. A pessimist has insinuated that this is because they are always in a chronic state of awaiting a proposal, but I do not believe this.

When, at length, the time came to go down to breakfast, Will descended hastily.

His host's family had just come down, including Sibyl, whose enforced confinement in her room of late had so weakened her that she insisted upon coming to the table.

"I have just been lecturing this young lady for coming down," said the judge, "but she insists, Doctor Massey, that you will side with her."

"I certainly shall," said Massey, cheerily, taking a seat beside her, "And if Miss Willoughby will consent I shall propose the further tonic of a ride in the saddle on this glorious morning."

"I should like it better than anything else," Sibyl assented.

"With myself as your humble escort?" added Massey.

"That feature shall not be allowed to interfere with my pleasure," was the gracious answer.

"Do you think she is yet strong enough to go out?" queried the judge, with an interrogatory glance at Massey that was full of significance.

"It will do her much more good to-day than staying in the house," answered Massey, with a return glance at the judge that satisfied the latter that it was all right.

Breakfast that morning was a cheerful affair, and even Sibyl appeared in good spirits, a fact which Massey—though with what reason it is hard to perceive—took as a good omen.

After the meal was over the young people departed for their respective rooms to don riding costumes, while the judge took it upon himself to see that the horses were ordered.

A half an hour later Massey and Sibyl cantered down the driveway and turned into the road.

"Where away?" demanded Will.

"Let us follow the road up over the mountain," proposed Sibyl. "It is a solitary road, and the scenery up on the mountain is wild and grand."

So they turned their horses' heads toward the mountain.

Sibyl had been looking at her best when they started. By a strong effort of her will she had succeeded in stilling the tumult within her to an extent that enabled her to conceal it from others.

But Massey, who was keenly observing her, was not long in determining that her composure was largely assumed.

Every time they came unexpectedly upon a foot passenger along the road, Sibyl would start and change color, only to regain her seeming composure when she saw that there was no cause for alarm.

"She is afraid of meeting Durand, even on this lonely road," thought Will.

The idea gave him a good deal of pain and uneasiness, for at breakfast he had hoped she felt free from the influence of Calvin Durand.

"If she cannot shake it off there is but a poor prospect for me," he replied. "While her will is dominated by that fellow's there is no room for me."

After a long canter they came to the base of the mountain, and began the ascent of the long and tortuous road at a walk.

When they had gone up a little Sibyl looked down upon the lovely panorama below and half forgot her

troubles. She seemed a radiant and joyous being again, and Will took courage afresh.

"Now or never," he muttered.

But it was not so easy to broach the subject uppermost in his mind.

"You appear to be your old self once more, Miss Willoughby," was the only thing he could find to say, after a few moments of deliberation.

"I am feeling much better this morning," she answered. "I think this canter is largely responsible for it. I have been reared too much out-of-doors to flourish in the house. I am almost inclined to censure you, Doctor Massey, for advising papa to keep me confined in my room for so many days.

"Did he tell you that it was by my advice?" Will asked.

"No, but I felt sure it was. Wasn't it?"

"Yes," Massey answered, frankly.

"I felt sure of it. But why did you so advise?"

"That brings up a painful subject, which I wish you were willing to discuss now, freely," he answered.

"I think I understand you," she answered, changing color, and looking highly embarrassed.

"I feel sure that you do," he rejoined, quietly. "Miss Willoughby, have I your permission to bring up that subject now."

"Yes," she answered, after looking anxiously and apprehensively about her.

"You are afraid Durand will overhear you," he went on, quickly, noticing her conduct. "Dismiss the fear from your mind. We are surely alone on this lonely road."

"I never feel that I am at a safe distance from him nowadays," she answered, with a half sob.

"That is because you believe him more powerful than he is," pursued Massey. "One good healthy defiance of him might show you how little you are in his power."

"I tried to defy him last night, in the drawing-room," Sibyl faltered.

"And with what result?"

"He let me go on in my own way for a few minutes," she answered. "I even went so far as to ring for help, meaning to have him ejected from the house."

"Yes?" Will interposed, eagerly.

"Then Mr. Durand laughed at me, and ordered me to say to the servant that I did not ring—that it was a mistake. I—I, who had presumed to defy him, found myself helpless in his hands. I did as he told me, for I had no choice but to obey him. I could not shake off his control, though I tried—heaven only knows how hard!"

Will was consumed with inward rage as he heard this pathetic narrative.

"When I came into the room why did you not appeal to me?" he asked. "Why did you not give me a pretext for interfering?"

"I wanted to," she faltered. "But Mr. Durand seemed to read my mind, and, with his terrible eyes fixed on my face, I was powerless to say a word that would displease him. Oh, Doctor Massey, it is terrible to find oneself such a hopeless slave. I shall pray that I may die if it lasts much longer."

Will was highly wrought up by this time.

The words which had so long faltered on his lips

would have escaped him now, even if he had tried to hold them back.

"Miss Willoughby," he cried, "there is one way in which you can spare yourself all further annoyance from him."

"How?" she demanded, looking fixedly at him.

"Sibyl," he went on, earnestly, "I love you as devotedly as ever man can love you. If you will let me, I will do all I can to make you happy. Marry me and you shall find that your husband is a strong bulwark against all harm."

"Marry you?" she repeated, incredulously.

"Sibyl, dearest," he went on, eagerly, "I fear I cannot give you any idea of how earnestly and sincerely I love you, but I ask you to believe me."

"You ask me to marry you?" she went on, wonderingly.

"Has the idea never occurred to you that some day I would say this to you?" he asked.

She shook her her head slowly.

"No, Doctor Massey, the idea of your loving me, or my loving you, has never entered my mind before. I have looked upon you as one of papa's friends, and—and—as a much better friend to me than I had any right to expect. But the idea of our marrying has never before occurred to me."

"Was the idea then, so absurd?" Will asked, reproachfully.

They had, as by tacit understanding, reined in their horses side by side in the narrow road, and sat facing each other.

"It is not that," Sibyl rejoined, hurriedly, seeing the pained look in Massey's face. "It is only that you

have always seemed to me like a friend—not a lover—and I have never for a moment thought of your loving me."

"Now that you know it," said Will, very slowly, "do you think that you could learn to love me?"

Sibyl shook her head dubiously.

"I cannot say, Doctor Massey. I fear not. And even if I did love you as you would wish me to, I could not become your wife."

"Why not, please?"

"Because I could not give myself to you entirely. It shames me to confess it to you, but I am no longer myself. I feel that I am only part of another's individuality."

"You mean Durand?"

"Yes."

"But if you were to marry me," Will went on, feeling a forlorn hope, "I should have a husband's right of protecting you."

"It would be useless," she sighed, with a mournful shake of her head. "Calvin Durand is not the man to respect the tie by which I might be bound to another. If I married anyone else, he would not rest until he had destroyed our happiness, and punished me soundly for my presumption in disobeying him."

"Then," returned Massey, with a dangerous glitter in his eyes, "there are rights which a husband is bound to enforce. He would answer to me—with his life, if needs be—for any injury which he attempted to my wife."

"That would do no good," she answered. "You do not know Calvin Durand as I have learned to know him. When he has once set his mind on anything, no

life—not even his own—would weigh a grain in the balance."

"Sibyl," Massey went on, "it is wrong for you to feel such unbounded confidence in that fellow's diabolical powers. Whether you marry me or not, put yourself under my protection and let me free you from his influence."

"I have tried to do that," she answered. "With what result? The attempt has proven a failure. You and I together are not strong enough to combat him."

This was a poser for Will. Her statement was so true that he did not know what to say.

"I have done all I can," he ventured.

"I know you have, Doctor Massey, and I thank you from the depths of my heart."

"And I shall make stronger efforts than ever, hearafter," he added.

She shook her head.

"It will be of no use, Doctor Massey. I feel convinced that my destiny is mapped out, and no human power can save me."

"You know not what you are saying," cried Massey, aghast.

"I know only too well what I am saying," Sibyl rejoined, excitedly. "It is too vividly before my mind night and day, sleeping and waking! I can never rid myself of these thoughts, which have become positive conviction with me."

"And what will it all end in?" he cried.

"Durand will marry me."

"But you do not love him!" exclaimed Will.

"Heaven forbid!" she cried, shudderingly. "My

one prayer to heaven is that I may die before I see the day when I am forced to become his wife."

"You can never be forced to do it against your will," cried Massey, with terrible earnestness.

Sibyl smiled sadly.

"My will will not enter into the matter at all. When Durand decides to marry me, he will come to me and say 'follow.' I shall follow, and, when the minister of God asks me if I take this man for my husband, I shall answer 'yes.' For, how can I help it? Durand will be at my side, and the words will come to my lips despite the strongest effort of the will that I can make."

Massey shuddered, courageons man though he was, at her vivid portrayal of an impending fate worse than death.

"Give me permission to watch over you, Sibyl," he cried. "I will never relax my vigilance while this wretch haunts you. I will even sleep outside your door at night. Come what will, he shall not meet you alone."

"Your sharpest vigilance would fail," she answered, with the solemnity of utter conviction. "Calvin Durand would outwit an argus."

"Will you allow me to do my best?" he demanded, earnestly.

"It can do no harm, I suppose," she assented. "But be careful, Doctor Massey, to do nothing so openly as to subject me to further punishment from him."

Will's voice was so choked that he could say but little as they cantered home. A terribly earnest resolve was forming in his mind. Night and day he would apply himself to the problem.

If he could not marry Sibyl, he prayed that he might, at all events, rescue her from the terrible fate that seemed in store for her.

As they entered the house a cloud seemed to rest over the spirits of both—a cloud that portended an evil storm.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MYSTERY OF THE BULLET.

WILL'S plan in a measure succeeded during the next few days. The sharpest vigilance on his part prevented Calvin Durand from seeing Sibyl.

The latter did not even know how many times Durand called. He was always told that Miss Sibyl was out, or "indisposed."

"Did she tell you to say that?" Durand demanded, roughly, one day.

The maid bristled up at this insolent question, gave a curt "No," and disappeared.

Nor was Sibyl at all responsible for his many refusals. It was Massey who gave the servants their instructions about Durand, saying that he did so with the judge's approval, which was true enough, for the judge had given him *carte blanche*.

But there came a disturbing element in the Willoughby mansion.

The city people sojourning in and around the little country place decided upon a presentation of amateur theatricals. Some vague charity was announced as the object; the real object was to have a lively time, and to masquerade a little.

The proprietor of the local hotel was petitioned to have the large dining-room turned into a theatre for the purpose. But he, rich in the experience of past years, put them off with a trumped-up excuse.

With the hotel closed against their charitable designs, the projectors of the play turned to Judge Willoughby as possessing the only other rooms in the place suitable for the performance.

His drawing-room would make a splendid auditorium, they told him, while by throwing open the folding doors, the adjoining room would easily contain the stage and dressing-rooms.

It was hard for Judge Willoughby to refuse any one, and besides he rather liked the jollity which the amateur theatricals would be sure to bring into his house.

Sibyl was eagerly importuned to play one of the parts, but Massey, learning that Durand had early applied for a position in the company and a part in the cast, prevailed upon the judge to decline on behalf of his daughter, on the ground that she was not in sufficiently good health to stand the strain.

Massey, however, promptly accepted the offer of a part. He wanted an opportunity to study Durand, and felt that this was a fortunate chance.

Singularly enough, Will was cast for the hero's part, while Durand, appropriately enough, was metamorphosed into a stage villain.

There were frequent rehearsals, the amateurs meeting from house to house about every afternoon until the day of the presentation came.

Massey, present at every rehearsal, spent far more time in covertly watching Durand than he did in mastering his part.

One afternoon Durand found opportunity to draw Will aside where they could talk without being overheard.

"I have called at the house several times of late," said Durand.

"Have you?" queried Will, indifferently.

"Yes, and you no doubt understand for what I went there."

"To see Miss Willoughby, I presume."

"Exactly."

"Then I would advise you to cease putting yourself to so much trouble," said Will, coolly. "Miss Willoughby feels no anxiety to see you."

"Indeed?" sneered Durand. "Then why doesn't she tell me so?"

"Dislikes to be rude, I suppose," rejoined Massey.

"See here," broke in Durand, angrily, "I warned you not to attempt any boyish games with me. You have taken it upon yourself to instruct the servants to say to me that Miss Willoughby is not at home. Never mind how I know this; I know it."

"And much good may it do you," retorted Will.

"I will give you just one more chance," said Durand, menacingly.

"It is declined in advance without thanks."

"If you wish to contest with me for Miss Willoughby's hand," Durand went on, "I will accept you as a rival if you will pledge yourself to use only manly means to triumph."

"What is your idea of the word 'manly'?" Massey asked, contemptuously. "Do you expect me to believe that you ever try to be manly?"

There was such deep derision in Massey's words that Durand lost his temper.

"My young friend," he said, coldly, "you are pre-

suming too far. If you knew me better you wouldn't. You can't afford to make an enemy of me."

Massey laughed outright.

"I am foolish enough not to fear you," he answered.

"We shall see," answered Durand.

Springing suddenly up, he placed both hands on Massey's shoulders and looked him squarely in the eye.

"Resist me," he whispered, hoarsely, "resist me if you can."

Will's eyes half closed; he looked at Durand in a dazed way.

The latter made a few passes with his hands, and Massey's eyes closed.

"Now you may apologize to me, and promise to obey me in the future," said the mesmerist, placing his hand authoritatively on Will's shoulder.

There was no answer.

Durand repeated his command, adding:

"Hurry up?"

Will opened his eyes and burst into a hearty laugh.

Durand started back, enraged and discomfited.

"My dear fellow," laughed Massey, "did you really believe you could hypnotize me? Well, you can't. I feared you could, the other day, and almost ran from you. I realize now how cowardly I was. How do you like my acting, by the way?"

"Laugh," snarled the discomfited Durand, "I'll make you cry yet, little boy."

"How? Hypnotize me again?" queried Massey, going into another roar of laughter.

They returned to the room where the rehearsal was in progress, Will still laughing in spite of himself and Durand looking strangely ugly.

"What is so funny?" demanded a sprightly young lady who was to play the soubrette part.

"I shall have to refer you to Mr. Durand," returned Will, still laughing. "I can't do the subject justice myself."

"Do tell us, Mr. Durand," pleaded the young lady. "It must be something awfully jolly, if it makes the solemn doctor laugh so boisterously."

But Durand pleaded that there was really nothing to tell, and gave Massey one of his blackest looks, for which the latter returned a contemptuous smile.

Well, the rehearsals went on, in spite of the very genuine quarrel between the hero and the villain.

Durand called regularly every day and inquired for Sibyl, only to meet the stereotyped answer that she was "not at home," or "seriously indisposed."

The night of the play came at last.

Judge Willoughby had, by and with the advice and consent of men in sundry trades, transformed the two rooms into a little queen of a theatre.

The people began to arrive early, as there were no reserved seats, and in a short time the little auditorium was crowded.

"Everybody" was there, and in the full significance of that comprehensive term.

The raising of the curtain was delayed, as it always is on such occasions, and the overture by the orchestra was necessarily lengthened into a concert.

At length, however, by the time that the audience had worked itself into a condition of great impatience, the tinkling of a bell announced that the curtain could now be expected to go up.

It was a society drama. Amateurs would play nothing else at that time.

The sprightly young lady, recovering from the first fright of appearing before so many people, dashed into her lines with reckless vivacity. Massey came upon the stage and the scene at the right time, and promptly fell in love with the sprightly young lady, as the hero always does in the play.

Of Durand it may be said that he acted the rôle of rascal with much cleverness. He, too, fell in love with the sprightly young lady, and the curtain went down on an intensely thrilling scene in which Massey stood with one arm thrown gingerly about the young lady's waist, while with the other he made gestures of defiance at Durand, who, in turn, stood over them with both fists uplifted.

The second act was a strictly "society" one. In the third came the interesting climax where Durand, as the villain, made an unsuccessful attempt upon Massey's life, only to be dragged away to receive merited punishment at the hands of the law, thus ridding the good people of the presence of the villain.

Judge Willoughby, who, to his own great delight, had been chosen stage manager, was also down to play the policeman in the thrilling retribution scene.

It devolved upon the judge to load the pistol and have it in readiness for the terrible business in hand.

A few minutes before the time, Judge Willoughby carefully loaded his own revolver with blank cartridges. Durand came up and received the weapon.

He pocketed it and said:

"I must go into the dressing-room. I have forgotten my hat and cane."

He disappeared into the dressing-room and almost immediately reappeared with the desired articles.

"Aim well over Massey's head," whispered the judge, as Durand received his "cue" and stepped out upon the stage.

Then followed a dialogue of crimination and recrimination, in which both men played their parts well, if the applause of the spectators may be considered a good criterion.

At the proper instant Durand drew his revolver.

Neglecting, or forgetting the judge's caution, he aimed full at Massey and fired.

According to the play, he was to shoot wide of the mark, whereupon Massey must spring upon him.

But consternation seized all present when Massey, instead of doing this, fell flat upon the stage!

Durand gazed at him, as if dazed, for a moment.

Then he threw the pistol aside, ran to Massey, raised his head and cried:

"Massey, old man, I didn't really hit you, did I?"

The judge and the other men in the amateur company rushed upon the stage, while the women shrank back.

When the spectators realized that something not down on the bills had occurred, there was a panic.

Sibyl, who had been sitting in the audience, a rapt spectator, was the only one present to realize the full significance of what had happened.

With a shriek of terror she arose and fled from the room, followed by her aunt.

Several of the ladies promptly fainted, while the men crowded forward to the stage.

Among them was the village physician.

"Make way for me!" he cried, authoritatively.

The crowd obeyed, and the physician, springing upon the stage, advanced and knelt beside Massey.

The latter, blanched and unconscious, was unquestionably wounded. There was a jagged hole in his coat near the shoulder, from which blood was flowing fast.

"Help me to get his coat off," ordered the doctor, and many willing hands reached forward to comply.

The physician ripped open Massey's shirt and laid the wound bare.

Judge Willoughby, pale and worried, leaned forward anxiously to hear the verdict.

"There is no vital spot touched," said the doctor, "but an artery has been cut."

"Is it a serious matter?" demanded the judge, anxiously.

"Serious enough," rejoined the physician; "fatal, if I don't soon succeed in stopping this flow of blood. Here, help me to take him into the library. There is a sofa there we can lay him on."

Massey was taken into the library, after which the doctor banished all from the room except one young man whom he desired to assist him.

The rest accordingly returned to the impromptu theatre.

"How in the world did it happen, Durand?" cried several.

"I am wholly at a loss to understand it," said the latter, looking decidedly puzzled.

"You aimed criminally low," growled Kennison, who was present, and who did not believe the affair to have been an accident.

"I'm afraid I did," Durand admitted, readily. "To tell the truth, I got so much in earnest that I was altogether too realistic. Gentlemen, I hardly need to tell you that I regret my foolish excitement. Put yourselves in my place, and you will understand my feelings."

"But I was positive that I loaded the revolver with blank cartridges," said the judge, nervously. "I can hardly believe that I made a mistake, and put in a ball cartridge."

"The pistol may tell some story of its own," said Durand, reflectively. "Let us examine it."

He went to the spot where he had thrown it and picked it up.

It was a small twenty-two calibre weapon with seven chambers.

Durand, in the presence of the others, examined each of the loaded chambers separately. They were all charged with blanks.

"There are no ball cartridges left in here," said Durand, "so it is hardly reasonable to assume that the one which I fired was a ball cartridge."

"Then how do you account for the wound?" demanded Kennison. "That is real enough, as we all know."

"I can only suppose," Durand answered, "that at such close range as I fired, the wadding of the blank cartridge was carried with sufficient force to inflict a surface wound, such as Massey's appears to be."

All accepted this explanation readily, except Kennison. He was still suspicious, but said nothing.

The ladies were reassured when told that Massey's injury was not likely to prove dangerous.

It had been planned to give a ball at the conclusion

of the play, but all ideas of further festivities were, of course, abandoned.

Few departed, however.

Will was, deservedly, a favorite, and nearly all of those present waited until the doctor should give his final opinion.

In answer to some one's question, Durand had just repeated his theory of the cartridge wadding, when the doctor entered.

"You are wrong," said the medical man, quietly. "It was not a blank cartridge which was fired at Massey. I have just extracted the bullet from his shoulder."

There was a start of genuine surprise as the doctor held up to view a small piece of lead about the size of a pea.

"I can't understand this," groaned the judge. "I was sure I loaded the pistol with nothing but blanks, and the thing was hardly out of my sight."

"Hardly," murmured Kennison to himself. "I think I begin to see very clear daylight in this matter. What an utter scoundrel that fellow Durand is! I have no doubt he meant murder, but it was cunningly planned, and I can see no positive evidence against him."

"How is Massey now?" asked the judge.

"He has regained consciousness," answered the doctor. "His living depends upon the way he passes the night. I shall not leave him until morning."

"To think that such a thing should have happened in my house," groaned the judge.

Durand confronted him.

"It was my fault, sir. I hope you can understand how I regret my excitable conduct."

"No," answered Judge Willoughby, "it was mainly my fault, unquestionably; for I loaded the pistol, and I made a terrible blunder."

Since they were both stopping at the same hotel, Durand did not fear to compromise himself by escorting Madame d'Armettre, who happened to be present.

"Calvin," said the Frenchwoman, as they walked slowly along, "you made a blunder to-night. You did not shoot so near Massey's heart as you meant to. However, you may succeed after all, for the doctor won't guarantee his living until to-morrow morning."

Durand turned savagely upon her.

"What do you mean, Lise?" he hissed.

The Frenchwoman shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, all is fair in love and war, Calvin."

"Never repeat this to me, nor to anyone else. Do you understand?" he cried, hoarsely.

"Calvin, mon ami, when did you ever have reason to doubt my discretion?" she returned.

Durand was convinced that he could depend upon her silence.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SERPENT STRIKES.

In the morning the doctor quitted Will's bedside.

"I think he'll come out of it all right," he said, to the judge. "The wound is a slight one, on account of the smallness of the bullet, and is beginning to heal already. Doctor Massey has a little fever, but no more than will wear off in the course of the day."

Sibyl, when she heard this report, breathed a sigh of intense relief. She, like Kennison, did not believe that it was an accident.

One of the earliest visitors to the house that day was Calvin Durand. He came to inquire after Massey's condition and to renew his expressions of regret over the accident which had come so near terminating disastrously.

Will received Durand's card and his conveyed regrets with a smile that was rather cynical. He was the third person who did not accept the explanation of "accident," though he said nothing.

There were many calls through the day from people who came to inquire after his health. It was surprising how popular Will had become in the little village. The sprightly young lady—she of the soubrette tendencies—was indiscreet enough to send a basket of dainty flowers, with the hope that Dr. Massey would soon recover from that horrid accident.

Sibyl came in to see him for a few minutes, but she

was morose and reserved. She did not once allude to Durand or to the shooting.

Possessing a vigorous frame that had never been weakened by excesses, Will was not long kept in bed.

It was characteristic of him that as soon as he was able to sit up he renewed his attack upon the books on hypnotism.

Durand called again soon, and by sending up his card to Massey managed to gain admittance into the house.

The answer came back that Dr. Massey was considerably improved in health, but did not care to see visitors as yet.

Sibyl happened to pass through the hall and Durand called to her.

"Can you spare me a few minutes of your time?" he asked, with mock deference.

She turned, without a word, and led him into a little reception-room.

"You have not been over-indulgent with me of late," he said.

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Oh, yes, I think you do. It has been impossible for me to see you, so jealously have you been guarded."

"I have not been feeling well," she protested. Already those keen eyes of his, riveted on her face, made her feel apprehensive and afraid of him.

Durand shrugged his shoulders.

"Bah! A polite fiction. You did not want to see me. Come, you might as well confess it. Every time I have called and asked for you, I have received a message that you were out, or indisposed."

"I did not know that you had called of late," she answered.

"Is that the truth?" he demanded, fixing his eyes upon her.

Sibyl flushed with shame at the suspicion in his words, but she had not the courage to resent it.

"Yes," she answered, mildly.

Durand believed her. Her voice and face were too truthful to be distrusted.

"Then I have to thank some one else?" he suggested. "Doctor Massey, for instance?"

"Why should he take such an interest in my affairs?" she asked, trying to look unconcerned.

"Oh, artless woman," sneered Durand. "You do not know that the man is your lover—my rival!"

Sibyl tried to look surprised, but failed. Acting was not in her line.

Durand was getting ugly now.

"Tell me the truth," he said, sternly. "Has not Massey already told you that he loved you?"

Sibyl faltered.

"You need not answer me," he cried, roughly. "Your looks have already done so. Have you told Massey how hopeless his case was?"

Sibyl's soul revolted with all its strength against this ignoble question. She tried to refuse to answer it, but this man who commanded her was all-compelling.

"Tell me what you said," he persisted.

"I told him—I——" she began.

"In the first place," supplemented Durand, coolly, "he asked you to marry him; you told him—what?"

"I told him that it was out of the question."

"Then," added Durand, who had been doing some rapid thinking in the last few moments, "he attributed your refusal to my influence, did he not?"

"Ye-e-s."

"And promised to help free you from my control?"

Sibyl felt that to answer would be to basely betray a friend, but it was of no avail to try to deceive this keen questioner, and her silence would undoubtedly be taken as assent.

"Yes," she admitted, when Durand repeated the question imperiously.

"I hadn't a doubt that Massey was playing that kind of a game with me," he said, with a bitter smile. "He is wrong, though, to try boyish tactics with me. I am old enough, and have had experience enough, to teach him a great deal."

Sibyl shivered upon hearing him talk in this cold-blooded fashion. A sudden fear that he meant harm to Massey seized upon her, and she felt sick at heart. It did not occur to her to doubt that he could carry out such a purpose—this terrible man.

"You—you will not harm him?" she gasped.

"Ah, then! You care, do you?" cried Durand, his eyes lighting up in an evil way. "You care for this lover of yours, and do not wish him to come to harm?"

"It is not that," she went on, hastily. "My misery is already greater than I can bear. To drag down one who has been very good to me would be too much—too much!"

"I shall leave Massey alone on one condition," said Durand, promptly. "It is that you do not allow him to again interfere with your affairs or mine. If you do I shall be sure to know of it, and something swift and terrible will happen."

It was a foolish threat, one at which a man would

have laughed; but with Sibyl, weak and subdued as she was, it had the desired effect.

"Now," said Durand, after a pause, "I come to a matter of downright business and you must give me your closest attention."

Sibyl shuddered and waited while he went on:

"I have made up my mind that we must be married soon——"

"Oh, no, no!" burst from Sibyl's lips like a shriek.

"Oh, yes, yes!" continued Durand, calmly. "Procrastination is a thief of time and happiness. You are as ready to marry me now as you ever will be. So I have decided that in a very few days the happy event shall take place."

"Happy event!" she cried, piteously; but Durand, unheeding her, went on:

"It is necessary for me to allude to a matter which I should have preferred to be silent about, if it were possible. But it is not. While I am not a begger, Sibyl, my affairs are somewhat complicated and entangled at present. It will be necessary for me to ask you for a loan to carry me along for a few weeks."

He stopped and looked at her.

He expected that she would be astounded at this, but she was not.

Sibyl, contemplating what seemed to her an unavoidable future, filled with poignant misery, was too benumbed, mentally, to be surprised at anything.

Durand waited some moments for her to say something; but, as she remained silent, he asked:

"Well, what have you to say?"

"I suppose it can be done," she replied.

"How?"

With his hands on his knees he leaned forward, and looked scanningly into her eyes.

"I have a few thousand in the bank," she said, slowly.

"How many?" he demanded, briskly.

"I do not know. It is some money that papa placed at my disposal, that I might not have to go to him every time I needed money."

"It is wholly at your disposal, then?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then it will be a very easy matter for you to accommodate me?"

"Yes."

Durand was thoughtfully silent for a few moments. At length he said:

"It will be necessary for me to go to Boston to-morrow. I shall not return till late in the evening. That will give you the whole of to-morrow in which to get the money. On the day after to-morrow, in the morning, you must come to the hotel early, and leave the money in a package at the desk for me."

"I can write you a check now," suggested Sibyl.

"No, that will not do. I must have the money itself, and I desire you to leave it, day after to-morrow, with the clerk at the hotel. You must come in person with it. Promise me that you will."

Under the compelling power of those terrible eyes, Sibyl promised that she would do so, without fail.

At this moment the library door opened, and Judge Willoughby thrust his head in.

"Sibyl, my darling, I want to see you."

"Very well, papa," she answered, glad of any interruption that drove Durand from her for a while.

"Go, now," she urged.

"Very well, I will do so. But remember," he whispered, "have no more confidences with Doctor Massey. If you do, I shall go to any length to punish you and him. And above all, let your father suspect nothing, or you will surely drag him down to misery. I have warned you. And do not forget the money."

"I will not forget," she answered.

As Durand stepped into the hall, he encountered and saluted the judge, who nodded, with a not very friendly look.

Judge Willoughby led his daughter back into the library, and seated her.

"What does that fellow come here for?" he demanded.

"He came to inquire after Doctor Massey, and——"

"And to see you," supplemented the judge.

"I suppose so," she assented.

"Sibyl, my darling," said the judge, gravely, "I am an old man, and one who has seen much of the world. I hope, therefore, you will give due weight to what I have to say."

"I am sure I shall, papa," she answered, quailing internally, nevertheless.

"Sibyl, my little woman, I don't like the looks of this Durand fellow. I will confess that, when I first became acquainted with him, I was rather prepossessed in his favor, but I have changed my opinion of him. I have had all sorts of men before me while sitting on the bench, and the more I study Durand, the more he looks to me like the sort of a man who has no regard for the happiness and well-being of others so long as his own ends are gained. While I have all faith in my

little daughter, he is not the kind of a man whom I care to see coming here to call upon you. If he continues his visits, I shall have to tell him flatly that I don't want him to come here any more."

While the judge was speaking Sibyl's heart was overflowing with grief and misery. She longed to throw herself in his arms, to tell him all, and to rely upon his protection. But a terrible dread that Durand would be able to carry out his threat and reduce the judge to misery such as hers held her back. She hesitated, and then whatever shread of resolution she had felt vanished.

"What do you say, little woman?" queried the judge.

"You know best," she answered, quietly.

Judge Willoughby bent forward and kissed her on the forehead.

"God bless you, my little daughter. My life would be an empty one without you in it. Now let me know if Durand calls again."

He left her, and Sibyl, overcome with shame, dread and remorse, sank down upon a sofa, and the long pent-up tears came like a deluge.

She had deceived her father, and she knew it. And the kindest, most loving, most indulgent father in the world. Oh, the shame of it! What misery she was about to bring into this good old man's spotless, happy life!

For a few moments she thought vainly of rebelling. It was not yet too late to defy the man who had so far triumphed over her. She would tell all, and trust implicitly to those who truly loved her. But—and yet——

The terrible dread came over her again. It was as

strong as ever. She had complete faith in the fulness of Durand's devilish power. Was she not herself a living proof of it?

And so she hesitated again, and the resolution escaped her finally.

A stony calm succeeded. She moved about the house so calmly that none suspected the poignant misery gnawing at her heart.

Later in the day Gilbert Kennison called. He wanted to see Massey, and wouldn't take no for an answer.

Will, who was very rapidly convalescing, was seated by a window, with one of the inevitable books on hypnotism lying open in his lap when Kennison was shown in.

"How are you, old man?" demanded Kennison, brusquely.

"Rapidly mending," answered Will, indicating a chair for his visitor.

"I have several weeks of business to attend to in a quarter of an hour," Kennison went on, breathlessly. "I'll come right to the point without wasting a word. How are we succeeding in our little scheme of blocking Durand's game?"

"Things are at a standstill, so far as our side is concerned," Massey returned.

"What?" gasped Kennison. "Haven't we made any headway?"

"So far I have kept Durand away from her a good deal of the time," said Will. "But, as far as the finale is concerned, I haven't yet got it in sight."

"This is serious," muttered Kennison, strumming with his fingers on the edge of the chair. "Massey,

old man, I'll be frank with you. I have waited in suspense as long as I can. I've made up my mind to speak to Sibyl to-day. If she'll have me, I'll guarantee to keep this hound, Durand, away from her, if I have to keep successively recommitting him to the hospital."

"A proceeding which would keep you in jail much of the time," supplemented Will, with a melancholy smile.

"Never mind," returned Kennison, with a vigorous shake of his head. "I have very little use for a man who would keep his hands in his pockets when a hawk is flying over his nest."

"I don't want to advise you wrongly," said Will, "but it seems to me that this is a very bad time to propose yourself to Miss Willoughby."

"Never mind. Anything is better than suspense. But I wanted to tell you first, that you might not think me taking advantage of you; we are rivals, of course."

"As far as a rival honestly can, I wish you the greatest success," said Will, with an attempt at cordiality. But, strive as he would, he could not help feeling jealous of this man, who was going to Sibyl with so much assurance.

"Thank you," said Kennison, extending his hand, which was readily grasped. "You are a devilish good fellow, Massey, and if I must fail, I want to see you win. Well, I must be off now to find Sibyl."

He hustled out of the room, leaving Will in a very much disturbed frame of mind.

At the end of three-quarters of an hour, Kennison returned.

His down-cast, chap-fallen appearance told the story of his wooing graphically.

"It's no use, Massey, she won't have me," he blurted.

"Keep up your courage, try again later," said Will, with as much sympathy as he could feel for this rival, who was equally as unsuccessful as himself.

But Kennison was altogether discouraged.

Massey, too, was disheartened.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BIRD IS FLOWN.

SIBYL WILLOUGHBY acted as one in a dream.

All thought or desire to confide in her father and Massey had deserted her. Her one remaining impulse was to obey Durand, and to have the terrible ordeal over as soon as possible.

On the morning following she ordered the dog-cart and drove to the bank.

She presented her check for $1000, payable to herself, and a guilty redness suffused her face as she stood in front of the cashier's window and waited for her money.

But that official did not appear surprised or suspicious. Judge Willoughby was very rich; his daughter had plenty of funds in the bank in her own name, and if she chose to withdraw and use a part of her own money, it was none of the cashier's business.

"How will you have the money?" he asked.

"One hundred in small bills, the rest in large," she answered, at random.

The cashier counted out the money, rolled it up, placed an elastic around it and handed it to Sibyl, who thrust it into her satchel, without stopping to count it.

Leaving the bank hastily, she drove rapidly home, went to her own room, remaining there through the day, except at meal times.

At breakfast the next morning she was ill at ease, though she strove hard to conceal the fact.

It was with a vague feeling of satisfaction that she heard the judge announce:

"I'm going to Boston to-day, to attend a confab of lawyers, and don't expect to be back until late this evening."

Massey, who was now rapidly recovering from his wound, was at table. He was startled for a moment, at seeing the look of satisfaction on Sibyl's face, but he dismissed the impression as an idle fancy.

Sibyl kissed her father as he departed, and the judge, in his hurry, did not notice that she was trembling.

As soon as he was off in the dog-cart, Sibyl flew to her room and changed her dress for a street costume.

Then, snatching up her satchel, to make sure that the money was all right, she descended to the verandah, where she waited impatiently.

In a few minutes Fay returned with the dog-cart, having driven the judge to the depot.

"Let me have the cart, Michael. I am going to drive into the village," said Sibyl, descending the steps.

"All right, miss; I'll drive ye, and be glad to, if ye'll lave me."

"No, Michael, I can drive myself, so I won't take you away from your duties."

Michael jumped out, helped her in and handed her the reins.

Sibyl, as she drove down the driveway, was oppressed by a vague feeling that this was one of the last times she was destined to see her dear old home.

She drove straight to the hotel, weighted the horse, and entered the office with as unconcerned a look as she could muster.

"Is Mr. Calvin Durand in?" she asked of the clerk.

"No, ma'am, I think not," returned the clerk, who had received instructions to give this answer.

Sibyl was disappointed and hardly knew what to do.

Must she come again? She did not want to.

"Have you any idea how soon Mr. Durand will be in?" she asked.

"I have not, ma'am."

There was another embarrassed pause, after which the clerk ventured to inquire:

"Would you like to leave a note or any message for Mr. Durand?"

Sibyl caught eagerly at this idea.

"I should like to leave a package for him," she said.

"Very well, ma'am, I will see that he gets it."

Sibyl drew the roll of bills, tied up in a pink paper parcel, from her satchel. The clerk politely dipped a pen in ink and handed it to her.

With trembling haste she penned Durand's name on the parcel, and then, summoning all her composure, she said:

"If you will kindly see that Mr. Durand gets this, I shall be much obliged to you."

"He shall have it, ma'am, as soon as he comes in," answered the clerk, and Sibyl, returning to the cart, drove home as fast as she could.

Durand, who was watching from a window in his room, saw her depart, and soon after he descended to the desk.

"Has any one called for me?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; there was a lady here ten minutes ago. I told her you were out, in accordance with your instructions."

"Quite right. Did she leave any word for me?"

"No, sir; left a package instead."

"Ah, let me have it."

The clerk handed him the package, and Durand, as if astonished, opened it, revealing the roll of crisp bank-notes.

He thrust it hurriedly into his pocket, as if he did not want the clerk to see it, but of course the latter did, and he queried with a facetious grin:

"Good news from the lady, sir?"

"That's my business, sir; not yours," retorted Durand, curtly, seeking purposely to give offence to the autocrat of the desk.

Durand went directly to his room. He had contrived the whole affair for the sole purpose of publicly compromising Sibyl.

"Massey is a high-strung fellow," he had reasoned. "If I can succeed in compromising her, he will let her severely alone hereafter, and he is the only enemy whom I have to fear."

Durand's plan had succeeded admirably.

The hotel clerk knew Sibyl Willoughby by sight, as every one in the village did.

He had been surprised to see her call for Durand, but on seeing Durand take a roll of bills from the package she had left for him, his astonishment was beyond measure.

How well Durand knew human nature!

The clerk kept the slanderous news to himself as long as he could and then he told the proprietor.

The latter, in turn, found the burden too heavy to carry, and told the circumstance—in strictest secrecy, of course—to one of his male guests.

But the guest was a man with whom it was hardly safe to trust a secret which did not concern his own welfare. It was hardly ten minutes before he had found some one to whom he could transfer the story.

At last a matron got hold of the story—a mamma with four plain, homely daughters. The story went the rounds of the feminine guests, and by the middle of the afternoon the story of Sibyl's misadventure of the morning was so well known to the people in the hotel that it was quite a general topic for discussion.

And so it went around:

"Sibyl Willoughby called to see Mr. Durand this morning. He was not in, and she appeared terribly agitated. She moaned, 'My God, perhaps I am too late! What shall I do?' Then she left a package for him, containing a very, very large sum of money for Mr. Durand. When he received it, he said . . . . . How disgraceful!"

And this story, in its distorted shape, went the rounds until it became more distorted than ever.

It was disgraceful. Yet these good people would have been astounded and indignant if some clear-headed person had had the courage to tell them that the disgrace was mainly on their side, for so readily crediting and adding to such gossiping scandal.

One man indiscreetly repeated the story to Gilbert Kennison, with the inevitable variations and additions.

It was in the smoking-room that it happened, and there were a score of men present.

Kennison flew into a towering rage.

"Shut your mouth, you scoundrel!" he roared.

The male scandal-monger became highly indignant.

"Be careful, sir," he exclaimed. "You have no reason or right to call me a scoundrel!"

"You are an infamous scoundrel!" retorted Kennison, wrathfully.

The other rose from his chair, pale and angry, and sprang at Kennison, but the latter was prepared for this, and promptly knocked him down.

Then, while two or three men rushed to raise their fallen comrade, Kennison went out, weak and trembling with rage and dismay, and engaged a cab to take him to Judge Willoughby's house.

"I'll see Sibyl and warn her what is being said of her," he muttered.

But, upon reflection, he changed his mind and determined to consult Dr. Massey first.

"I'm too hot to do anything on my own responsibility just now," he sensibly decided.

So to Massey's room he went.

It was just after the dining hour, and he expected to find Will smoking in his room.

He was not disappointed. Massey was there, surrounded by dense clouds of tobacco smoke, and in his lap was a book on hypnotism.

"Come in, Kennison," called Will. "Take a seat. Have a cigar?"

"Too mad to smoke," blurted Kennison.

"Is it anything that must be said this instant?" asked Will, looking at him in mild surprise.

"No-o," admitted Kennison, "but I can't hold it in for the life of me."

"Nevertheless, you must," returned Will, coolly.

"Silence is doubly golden when one is terrible mad. I won't hear a word from you, Kennison, until you've smoked this cigar through. By that time I hope you'll be cool enough to talk rationally."

And, after handing his guest a cigar, Will went on placidly reading, while Kennison lit the weed and endeavored to cool off just a little. His heat did not abate, however, and, after a few whiffs, he threw the cigar into the fireplace.

"Massey," he burst out, angrily, "there's a dirty lot of scandal going the rounds at the hotel about Sibyl and Durand."

Will threw his book into a remote corner.

"Of course it's not true," he said, quietly; "but you and I, Kennison, must get to the bottom of it, and explode the scandal. Let's hear what is being said."

Thereupon Kennison plunged into an excited narration of the story, and gave it just as it had been told to him by the luckless scandal-monger.

"I think there is very likely some truth in the story," said Will quietly, when it was finished.

"You do?" gasped Kennison, incredulously.

"Yes. You and I both know how thoroughly under this villain's control the poor girl is, and it wouldn't surprise me a bit if he had asked her for money. If he did it follows as a matter of course that she gave it to him. She has no choice but to obey him."

"But she wouldn't be absurd enough to do it so publicly," insisted Kennison.

"Yes, she would, if Durand told her to," Will replied, quietly. "And it seems very probable to me that, under all the scandal, there is a bare foundation of truth. I see no reason to doubt that she called at the

hotel and left the money for him, though all the exciting details which go with the story are doubtless lying additions. I shouldn't be surprised if Durand brought about the whole affair for the purpose of compromising Miss Willoughby, and thus put her still more in his power than ever."

"Then, by heaven, he has no right to live!" cried Kennison, passionately.

"I am almost tempted to agree with you," Will went on, quietly. "Still, we have no right to settle that question. The problem is, What can we do to give this scandal a set-back? Of course, if it is true, neither you nor I attach any blame to Miss Willoughby."

"I should say not," Kennison rejoined, emphatically.

For the better part of an hour the two men discussed the question earnestly in all its phases.

At length they heard a commotion in the hallway.

The butler's heavy tones could be heard saying:

"Keep cool, man! That's no way to go to a gentleman's room."

"Be the powers, I'm going jist the same, so stand out of me way, ye foine man, or I'll rush in t'rough ye!"

Will was about to step to the door and interfere, when the door opened, and Michael Fay, the coachman, rushed in without ceremony.

The Irishman was panting for breath, and looked as disturbed as if he had seen one of the banshees of his race traditions.

"What's the matter, Michael?" Will asked.

"Oh, be the powers, Docthor, this is an unhappy night for me ould masther."

"Be calm, Michael, and tell us what you mean," said Will, wondering what had happened to so disturb the faithful fellow.

"Miss Sibyl, sir—" he began.

"Yes? What has happened?" cried both men, springing to their feet.

"She's gone, sir."

"Gone!" repeated Will, with a terrible sinking feeling at his heart, while Kennison seized the Irishman as if to shake further information out of him.

"Divil a bit I know, sir. Lave go of me, Misther Kennison. Ye see, Docthor, twinty minutes ago the little darling sint word to me to harness one of the horses to the dog-cart, and to bring it to the front dure. Sure, I'd only me duty to do, and I done it. So I put the horse to the cart, took it to her, and she drove off."

"So Miss Willoughby has taken it into her head to take a drive, and has done so?" said Will, more calmly. "Michael, you are an excitable fellow."

"But wait till ye hear the end o' me story, Docthor," pleaded Michael.

"Go on."

"Well, Docthor, I don't know why, but I misthrusted the poor darlin' had been led into doin' something she ought not to, so I ran as fast as I could down the road, an' the trees betwane us kept her from seein' me. I ran so fast, Docthor, that I got to the ind of the driveway before she did. May the saints protect me, what did I see!"

"Well, what did you see?" cried Kennison, harshly.

"Misther Durand, the villain—I never did like the looks o' him—he got into the dog-cart and took the reins from Miss Sibyl's hands. Thin sez he to her, sez

he, 'It'll be all right, me little bird, before they ever set eyes on us again.'"

The terrible significance of this event was not lost on Michael's hearers.

"Good God!" burst from Kennison's lips.

While Will, whose lips and face were blanched, said:

"Kennison, we must follow them at once, before it is too late."

"But Massey, you are still weak from your wound. You must not try to go. It might kill you."

"Do you think I could stay behind?" Will demanded, hoarsely.

"Quick, then! We've not a moment to lose!"

"An' I'll go with yer honors," cried Michael. "Sure, if there's any fighting to be done, I'll be there."

Will hurriedly drew on a pair of boots, a short coat and a cap. Last of all he dropped a revolver into his pocket, saying grimly:

"Who knows but we shall need this in self-defence?"

"Quick!" cried Kennison. "Every minute lost is dangerous."

The three men hurried to the stables as fast as their legs could carry them, and three horses were hurriedly saddled.

They leaped astride of their animals, and then the question presented itself:

Which road to take? Where to go?

It was, indeed, a poser.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TOO LATE!

"WHICH way did Durand drive, Michael?" both men demanded at once.

"Begorra, gintlemin, that's more'n I know. I know he drove down the road, but, as yer honors know, there's a dozen roads he could turn off in the first five minutes."

"Shall we divide, then, and take different paths?' Kennison asked of Massey.

"We might," answered the latter, "but I fear we shall have small chances of success that way. Three of us can hardly cover twelve roads, and Durand already has a fearful lead on us."

"Hould on a bit, yer honors," Michael cried, suddenly. "I have an idea that'll save us all the bother."

So confident did the Irishman appear that his companions sat patiently in their saddles while he dismounted and ran out of the barn.

Almost instantly he reappeared, dragging the mastiff, Nero, by his chain.

"Nayro is the bye fer us," exclaimed Fay, leading the dog toward one of the stalls. "It was Deacon, yer honor, as was hitched into the dog-cart. Nayro'll foller the scent of the horse, I'll be bound."

The mastiff scented the stall, wagged his tail, and looked up into Michael's face.

"Aha, me darlin', ye know what it is that's wanted of ye this night. Foller the horse, Nayro, me bye."

The mastiff wagged his tail again, and yelped eagerly. As soon as Michael released him he ran to a spot in the centre of the stable, where he sniffed the floor and uttered a series of short barks.

"Good for ye, ye ould dog; that's where the horse stood while I was harnessing him. Foller the horse, Nayro! off wid ye!"

Out of the stable the dog ran with his nose to the ground, and after him rode Massey and Kennison. Michael hurriedly mounted and caught up with them.

Down the driveway the mastiff led them, and out upon the road.

"The dog knows what we want of him," shouted Michael. "He's going the same way that shcoundrel Durand wint."

Nero's intelligence and skill put them all in high spirits. The animal ran unflaggingly along, never for a moment seeming to lose the scent.

After passing several of the intersecting roads, the dog at last turned down one of them.

"Hold on," cried Massey. "Can the dog be right? This is a wild, desolate road, that people seldom travel on."

"Sure, what better road would that villain Durand want, thin?" answered Michael.

This was convincing logic, in their frame of mind, and the dog's lead was unquestioningly followed.

For the next half hour the three men galloped hard after the dog.

Still they did not come within sight of the fugitives.

"We must soon come in sight of them," cried Kennison.

"Don't be so sure of that," answered Massey. "Remember that start Durand had, and you may be sure that he'll not spare the horse."

"How are you bearing up under this strain, Massey?" Kennison asked, when they had ridden a little further.

"First rate," answered Massey, and his companions were reassured, but he himself knew it was only the sustaining power of his excitement and anxiety which kept him from pitching headlong out of the saddle. He was yet so much of an invalid that the violent riding weakened him terribly.

They came, at last, to an elevated piece of road.

From this summit they could look down into the little valley below. Light shone out from many houses, and it appeared to be a village of considerable size.

Still Nero led them on, always certain of the trail, and never pausing or going to the side.

In ten minutes they reached the outskirts of the village and rode through the principal street.

On and on ran the dog. When he reached the hotel he veered to one side and ran straight into the open door of the stable. The mastiff did not pause until he came to a certain stall, and there, sure enough, was the judge's horse, Deacon, nibbling leisurely at a feed of hay.

The three men rode in after the dog, and dismounted.

"There's Deacon, sure enough," cried Michael, "and Nayro's the bye fer us. He's taken us straight here."

"Stay here," said Kennison, "and I will make inquiries."

"Who brought that horse and the dog-cart here?" he asked one of the stable men.

"Don't know who they were, sir; gent and lady."

"Where did they go?"

"Don't know, sir; in the hotel, I reckon."

Kennison strode out of the stable and into the hotel office.

He described Durand and Sibyl to the clerk, and asked if they had come there on a dog-cart.

"Yes, sir," said the clerk.

"Are they here now?" demanded Kennison, striving with all his might to keep cool.

"No, sir."

Kennison placed a ten dollar bill on the desk, which the clerk adroitly covered with his hand.

"Now, tell me what you can about them," said Kennison.

"They came here, sir, and the gentleman engaged a suite of three rooms."

Kennison started.

"Are they there now?"

"No, sir. Gone up to the little church, I guess. Kind of quiet wedding party, as it were."

"Good God!" broke from Kennison's lips. "How long have they been there?"

"Half an hour, I guess. If you wait a few minutes they'll be back here."

But Kennison did not stay to hear the last.

In a few seconds he was at the stable-door.

"Come," he shouted, and Massey and Fay hurried to his side.

"They're gone to the church to be married," he ex-

plained, hurriedly. "I'm afraid we're too late, and we've not a minute to lose."

Three men with pale faces ran up the road. They had no need to inquire where the church was, for they had passed it on their way into town.

On and on they ran, and even Will seemed endowed with extraordinary strength.

In less than three minutes they were at the door of the church. Kennison started to run up the steps, but Massey restrained him. "Be careful what you do," he urged. "This is a sanctuary, and there must be no violence. Let me go up the steps, and I will see how far this fearful mockery of a marriage has gone."

Kennison, with a self-control rare in him, allowed Massey to have his own way.

Will ascended the steps with trembling knees, softly pushed the door open, stepping a few feet inside, where he could stand unseen in the dark. He saw a sight that nearly made his heart stand still.

The little church was lighted only near the altar. Half a dozen villagers were present as witnesses, while before the white-robed rector—merciful heaven!—stood Calvin Durand and Sibyl Willoughby.

The marriage service was going on.

Could he stop it?

This was the only question which presented itself to Will Massey, as he stood there, clutching at a pillar for support.

And then, like a knell to all his hopes, came the words, in the rector's solemn tones:

"The Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace;

that ye may so live together in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting."

It was the benediction, the closing portion of the marriage ceremony!

Sick at heart, Will stole softly out, and then staggered down the steps.

Kennison sprang forward to support him, at the same time demanding hoarsely:

"How far has it gone?"

"They are married," Massey answered, stonily.

"Too late!" burst from Kennison's lips in an awful groan.

But an idea came to Will Massey in that instant.

"Quick, Kennison," he said, seizing his friend by the shoulder, and pushing him away. "Don't ask any questions, but go quick to the hotel, get our horses and the dog-cart, and drive here like mad."

"What—" began Kennison, but Will pushed him away.

"Quick! Quick! A moment too late, and Sibyl is lost."

That was all the explanation Kennison needed for the time being. He turned and ran with all the speed he could command.

"Stand back behind that tree, Michael," directed Will. "Don't try to do anything unless I tell you to."

Michael dodged obediently behind the tree, and Will softly ascended the church steps again and peered in.

Durand and Sibyl and the small audience were kneeling, while the rector's voice went up in prayer.

With a sickening sense of the sacrilege of the affair

Will stole out again. The scene was more than he could bear.

How slowly the minutes dragged by!

Kennison had not yet come with the horses.

Must he arrive too late?

The prayer came to an end at length. Will knew that because he could hear the low, soft notes of the organ, the tones gradually swelling to a triumphant, joyous march.

The people were coming out. Durand and Sibyl would come out with them.

Where was Kennison, with the horses?

The church door opened, and two or three people came out.

Will heard a distant rumble of wheels, and his pulses beat feverishly.

Two or three more people came out.

Then again the door opened, and Durand came out, with Sibyl—now his wife!—leaning on his arm.

Her face was pale, but she appeared calm. Will's quick and trained eye saw what no other eye saw—that Sibyl's calmness was altogether due to the hypnotic trance into which Durand had thrown her.

They descended the steps, this horribly mated pair, and, at that moment, the sound of wheels came nearer, as Kennison, driving the horse at a mad gallop, drew up before the door.

Durand was startled. He had fancied himself secure from pursuit, but now he saw before him three men whose presence there boded him no good.

Kennison jumped out of the cart and made straight for Durand.

The latter promptly drew a revolver and covered him with it, crying:

"Stand out of my way, sir."

Kennison naturally shrank back before the muzzle of the weapon, and Will struggled to get out his pistol, which had caught in the lining of the pocket.

But there was no need of it.

Fay, who had been crouching behind the tree, now sprang upon Durand, before the latter saw him, and bore him to the ground. The struggle for the possession of the pistol was short and decisive, Fay being much the more muscular man of the two.

Meanwhile, what of Sibyl?

She had seemed not to comprehend much of what was passing. Leaning up against the porch of the church she looked dreamily on, and seemed to have no sympathy with any of the contestants.

"What's all this?" came in a stern voice from the rector, who at this moment descended the steps. "Brutal fighting going on before the sanctuary of God? Shame upon all of you!"

Massey had interfered in time to prevent the enraged Michael from destroying Durand's facial expression, but the Irishman rejoiced in the fact that he had gained possession of the pistol.

Durand now struggled to his feet again and glared dangerously at his assailant. When he heard the rector's voice he turned to the reverend gentleman and said:

"It seems that a fellow who was un unsuccessful rival of mine has brought his friends here to take my bride away from me. Is that to be allowed in a Christain land?"

"Not if I can help it," returned the clergyman, emphatically. "Take Mrs. Durand upon your arm, sir, and, if these fellows attempt to hinder you, they will have to reckon with me."

The rector, who seemed to possess a broad frame and determined will, placed himself at Sibyl's side, while Durand stepped to the other, scowling at Massey and Kennison with a sneer of triumph.

But Will was not so easily defeated.

He stepped squarely in front of them, and Kennison promptly took a position at his side.

"Stop a moment," said Will, sternly. "I am Doctor Willard Massey, a guest of Judge Willoughby's. This lady, whom you have just married to the villain at her side, is Judge Willoughby's daughter, and she has gone through this mocking ceremony in an hypnotic trance. We are rescuing the lady to take her back to her father's house before this grievous wrong has been carried farther."

The clergyman started back in amazement at this strange story.

"It's impossible!" he gasped.

"It's quite true, sir," Will went on, breathlessly, "and if you are a minister of the Gospel you have no right to give such an infamous crime your support. Jump into this cart here, and we will take you before her father to learn the truth."

It was plain that the rector was wavering.

"This is a lie, sir," said Durand, turning to the clergyman in his turn. "You saw yourself that this lady became my wife willingly enough. Ask her yourself now, if you wish."

"We have no time to lose," whispered Massey.

"Put her in the cart while I jump in and seize the reins. Then you and Fay mount and follow me."

Kennison promptly obeyed.

Before his design could be anticipated, he had seized Sibyl, and lifted her bodily into the dog-cart, while Massey jumped in and took the reins.

Durand ran after them and stretched out his hands to seize Sibyl. But here he was confronted by an unexpected enemy. Nero, the mastiff, bristled up in front of him, growled and showed a double line of white ivories.

Quite a little crowd had collected by this time, and most of them were men.

"Twenty dollars to every man who helps me!" shouted Durand, and a dozen men ran to him.

Kennison and Michael had by this time unfastened their horses from the back of the dog-cart, and had mounted.

Two or three men sprang at Deacon's head, but the two mounted men rode at them, and they retreated.

Will whipped up Deacon, and the maddened animal plunged and ran off, closely followed by the animals ridden by Kennison and Fay.

Not a moment too soon, either, for the crowd, urged on by Durand's offer of money, would have soon triumphed.

The drive home was a long one, and a silent one, for Will thought it unwise, under the circumstances, to attempt a word of conversation with Sibyl.

Judge Willoughby had returned home in the meantime. His butler had overheard enough to be able to give him an idea of what had happened in his absence.

He was now pacing up and down on the verandah, a prey to the wildest feelings.

At last, late in the night, he heard the rattle of wheels and the clatter of hoofs. Then the dog-cart dashed up to the door, followed by its mounted escort.

Judge Willoughby saw his daughter in the cart, supported by Massey, and he ran frantically down the steps, crying out:

"Sibyl, my daughter! Thank God that you have been found and brought back to me."

"Let us get her to her room at once," said Massey, quietly.

They lifted the almost unconscious girl from the cart, and bore her into the house.

CHAPTER XIX.

DURAND CLAIMS HIS WIFE.

WHEN they reached the hall Sibyl struggled from their arms, and protested that she could walk well enough.

"Very well, then, my darling; let me escort you to your room," answered Judge Willoughby.

"No, no, not there," she cried.

"And why not, my pet?"

"Oh, papa, I am afraid. It will be such a long way from you."

Without another word the judge led her into the library, whither the others followed.

Sibyl was induced to lie down on a sofa, and then the judge asked Massey to relate all that had occurred.

Massey told all as briefly as he could, adding at the end:

"Perhaps I have presumed too far, sir, but in your absence I did what I thought for the best. I know that delay would be terrible, and what I did I did on the impulse of the moment. However, I have nothing to regret, if my course has your approval, sir."

Judge Willoughby arose and seized Massey's hand, pressing it earnestly.

"My dear Massey, you have done just what I should have done had I been at home; you have done it admirably, too."

"I do not, of course, claim any credit for my share in to-night's doings," Will answered. "I am practically an invalid, and should have been unable to do anything if it had not been for Mr. Kennison and Fay."

"It was your head that directed us," protested Kennison. "Without your help we shouldn't have known what to do."

"Gentlemen," said the judge, gravely, "I shall always feel more gratitude toward you both than I can ever prove. Mr. Kennison, I owe you a sincere apology. A little while ago I asked you to call here less frequently. It was through false information from Durand, which I too readily credited. I sincerely beg your pardon, Kennison."

"Please say no more about it," returned Kennison, readily. "We all of us understand Durand better now than we ever did before."

"I suppose," put in Massey, "that Durand will attempt some sort of proceedings against us for abducting his wife from him."

"It is altogether possible that he could succeed in starting such an action against you," said the judge, "but he had better not try it. He has a reckoning to settle in court with me which will keep him busy for some time."

There came a knock at the door, and the judge's sister entered.

"Why did you not tell me that Sibyl had returned?" she asked.

"My dear sister, I forgot all about it," the judge returned. "I have been so anxious to hear the story of this night's work that I forgot your own anxiety."

The elder Miss Willoughby, of course, had to be

told all that had happened, and her naturally grave face was far graver than ever at the close of the narration.

"The poor child must go to bed at once," she said, decisively.

"No, no," protested Sibyl, who, up to this time, had remained insensible, seemingly, to all that went on around her.

The judge went up to her, placed his arms around her neck and helped her to rise.

"Have no fear, my pet," he said, tenderly. "You have nothing to be afraid of. Your maid shall sleep with you. I will guard your door in the hallway and Michael will stay under your windows. No one can get near you whom you do not want, and no one can harm you in any way."

Sibyl permitted herself to be led up-stairs, where her aunt and the maid undressed her, and put her into bed. Obedient to his promise, the judge sat through the night in an arm-chair outside her door, while Fay patrolled the grounds outside.

"I wish the dirty shcamp would jist try an' come here to-night," muttered Fay, as he walked up and down.

Judge Willoughby sat in the chair outside Sibyl's door during the whole of the long night. He did not sleep; he could not, so agonizing were the thoughts that racked his brain.

But Durand was not seen, nor heard from. He was far too shrewd to take the chances of being caught on the judge's premises.

Kennison retired with Will, but neither of them

were able to catch more than a few minutes of fitful sleep.

The excitement, however, did not tend to enfeeble Massey. It rather strengthened him, as such strains sometimes do. From that night he grew stronger, the wound troubled him no more.

"Kennison," said Will, at one time in the night.

"Yes, old man."

"Then you are not asleep."

"Small danger of that."

"Didn't it strike you," Massey continued, "as rather strange that Sibyl was out of the trance by the time we reached home. Durand certainly didn't take her out of it."

"How do you account for it?" asked Kennison.

"I took her out of the trance, on the drive home," said Massey. "So I haven't been studying the subject to no purpose, you see."

"Pity you can't keep her out of Durand's influence altogether," returned Kennison.

"That's just the point," said Will, rather excitedly for him. "I begin to believe that I can."

"How?" asked Kennison, incredulously.

"I have been thinking it over for the past hour," said Massey, "and I believe I've hit upon the right way at last."

"How are you going to do it?" persisted Kennison.

"I'm not prepared to discuss the method yet," Will answered, "but I shall try it at the proper time, and I am all anxiety for fear it will fail."

The family breakfasted at the usual hour in the morning. Every one came to the table with a sense of

having passed through a terrible nightmare, and their haggard faces showed how all had suffered.

The elder Miss Willoughby decided that Sibyl should come down to the table too. The poor girl moved about with a passive calmness—or rather torpor—that wrung the hearts of the beholders.

No allusion was made to the events of the night before. An attempt at cheerful conversation was made from time to time, but it was a dismal failure.

After breakfast the judge's sister took Sibyl to her room, and remained there with her, while the men withdrew to the library to discuss the situation.

"The question is," said the judge, "whether we can prove that our poor girl was in an hypnotic trance when the marriage ceremony was performed last night. What is your opinion, as a physician, Massey?"

"As far as I am concerned," Will answered, "I am ready to go into any court and state upon my oath that she was in a complete trance when I saw her come out of the church. And it is my opinion that she has been more or less in a trance ever since the day when we had the test in the library."

"What a blind fool I was to permit that," groaned the judge. "However, Massey," he went on, "I have no doubt that, if we take this matter into court, Durand will be able to produce a large group of learned witnesses who will scout at the idea of hypnotism."

Massey shook his head.

"Very few progressive physicians can be found who will scout at the idea of hypnotic control," he said decidedly. "It has been tried very extensively in the medical colleges and hospitals, and while it is a science of

which but little is known, learned men are no longer disposed to hoot it as a device of charlatans."

At this moment the conference was interrupted by a knock at the door. A servant entered, and handed the judge a letter, saying:

"A messenger just brought it, sir."

The servant retired, and the judge hastily tore the envelope open.

His fingers trembled as he took out a sheet of paper, unfolded it and read it.

"Curse the fellow! I expected something like this from him. Just listen."

And the judge read:

DEAR SIR—As you are doubtless aware by this time, your daughter and I were duly married last night, according to law. As she is of age, I did not deem it necessary to secure your consent.

Just as Mrs. Durand and myself were leaving the church, three ruffians forcibly took her from me and carried her off.

I have no doubt that Mrs. Durand is now in your house. Please let me know if such is the case, or if she is not in your home and you know where she is, please have the kindness to advise me, as I, of course, intend to claim my wife.

As to the persons concerned in her abduction, I shall apply for whatever remedy the laws of the State hold out to me.

Hoping to be favored with an early reply, I am

Very truly yours,

CALVIN DURAND.

The three men were silent for a few moments after the reading of the letter.

"What do you think of it?" the judge asked at last.

"A characteristically bold letter," Massey answered. "Just what I should have expected from the man who wrote it."

"It's a sheer case of 'bluff'," Kennison exclaimed.

"Of course you don't intend to let him take her away."

"Certainly not," answered the judge, quietly.

"What steps can he take?" queried Massey.

"None, as far as Sibyl is concerned," Judge, Willoughby replied. "She cannot be compelled to live with him, if she does not want to. If she refuses," grimly, "he can sue her for divorce on the ground of desertion. However, we won't put him to that trouble.

"As far as you two gentlemen and Fay are concerned, he could easily secure warrants for your arrest, in which case I should immediately give bail for you all. However, that would mean only temporary annoyance for you. When the facts came out he couldn't secure a conviction against you.

"And, by the bye, perhaps I can block Mr. Durand's little game of having you arrested. I will telegraph the district attorney and the police judge of this district, asking them to take no action in the matter if they are asked to, until I have seen them. I will write the telegrams now."

Judge Willoughby did so, and sent the despatches off.

"There," he said, "if Durand tries to get out a warrant against you three I think he will find himself checkmated."

"And, now, what else can be done?" queried Massey.

"I have two or three cards in reserve," answered the judge. "There is one which I shall play immediately. I shall begin, in Sibyl's behalf, suit for the annulment of the marriage."

"Can it be done?" asked Will, thoughtfully. "I mean, can an annulment be obtained in this case?"

"I am pretty sure it can," Judge Willoughby replied. "If we can only prove to the satisfaction of the jury that the poor girl was in a trance, it will amount to a case of *vis major*, or compulsion, without a doubt. In that case, an annulment would be readily granted. And now I must answer Durand's note."

"Are you going to tell him that you propose to ask for an annulment?" asked Kennison, anxiously.

"Certainly," was the composed answer. "I have no desire to keep him in ignorance concerning it. The paper may be served on him, anyway, inside of twenty-four hours."

The judge wrote busily for a few minutes. When he had finished, he read this to his hearers:

SIR—I am, as you suppose, aware of the marriage which took place last night, but which was, as you will soon learn, no marriage at all. No court in America would decide it to be a valid marriage, as my daughter was under your influence all the time, and incapable of resisting your commands.

As to her whereabouts, you need not concern yourself about that question. You will accomplish nothing if you do. You cannot see her again, and shall not, until she confronts you in court in an action for the annulment of a marriage which was fraudulent, and therefore not valid.

Steps will be taken at once for the annulment of the marriage. This is all I have to say to you, sir, other than to warn you to be very careful what you attempt to do, for there are laws in the land, as you shall soon discover.

Judge Willoughby folded the letter, sealed it, and sent it off by Durand's messenger, who was still waiting at the outer door.

A couple of hours later, despatches arrived from the district attorney and the police judge, assuring the judge that no warrants would be granted for the arrest of the

parties he had named until he had had an opportunity of consulting with them.

In the afternoon the three men went into the drawing-room, where they met Sibyl and her aunt, and an attempt was made to pass the time pleasantly, in the hope of keeping Sibyl's mind from her troubles.

But it made all hearts ache to see how spiritless and benumbed she seemed.

At every sound she started, as if dreading some unavoidable catastrophe. The efforts made by all to restore her to better spirits were useless.

Suddenly they were startled by the sound of angry voices at the outer door.

Sibyl's face paled, and she would have fallen if her aunt had not caught her and led her to a sofa.

"You can't come in this house, sir," they heard the butler say decisively.

"I tell you we will come in," returned a voice, easily recognized as Durand's.

Judge Willoughby hurried to the door, while Massey and Kennison stood before Sibyl to protect her at all hazards.

Before the judge reached the door it was thrown open, and Calvin Durand entered, followed by two of the village constables.

Durand and the judge faced each other, and there was a dangerous look in the face of each.

"Judge Willoughby," said Durand, speaking slowly and distinctly, "I have come to claim my wife. Knowing from my experience of last night that I could expect to meet with violence I have brought along these officers, who will protect me, if necessary."

"My daughter is not your wife by any right what-

ever," Judge Willoughby answered, sternly. "The marriage was a mockery."

"The marriage was legal," replied Durand, coldly, "and I have a perfect right to enjoy the society of my wife. Sibyl, my darling, will you come with me?"

Upon hearing these words Sibyl rose slowly from the sofa and started to go to him, as one who had no choice but to obey.

But Kennison and Massey seized her firmly, though gently, and held her back.

An evil smile lit Durand's features.

He turned to the constables and said:

"You see, gentlemen, my wife is willing to come to me, but these fellows seek to prevent her by main force."

CHAPTER XX.

"ARREST THAT MAN!"

THE constables nodded, but it was plain that they did not care to be too officious in the judge's house.

Massey and Kennison had forced Sibyl back and seated her on the sofa.

Suddenly, darting between them, Durand seized her by an arm.

"You must come with me," he hissed. "You are my wife, and I can compel you to live with me."

"Not exactly," answered the judge, quietly. "This is not England, and in this country, if she were twenty times your wife, you could not force her to live with you."

Durand, paying no attention to this remark, the judge decided to play one of his reserve cards.

Turning to the constables, and then pointing to Durand, he ordered, sternly:

"Arrest that man!"

Durand startled, dropped Sibyl's arm, and showed a thunderstruck face to the judge.

The constables, instead of directly obeying, demurred.

"There is no warrant," said one of them. "Without one we can arrest no one."

"I am a magistrate," answered Judge Willoughby, "and my verbal order is sufficient. Refuse at your peril. Arrest that man, I say!"

The constables hesitated no longer, but advanced to Durand, and dragged him from Sibyl's side.

Durand struggled desperately, but it was one weak man in the hands of two strong men, and the battle was to the strong.

"Better iron the man," suggested the judge.

"I shall refuse to submit to any such indignity," cried Durand, facing the judge.

"Oh, very well; refuse, then," was the cool answer.

The officers glanced at the judge. A wave of his hand decided them. The irons were snapped around the prisoner's wrists.

"Officers," said the judge, "you may wait here for a few minutes. No, better still, take your prisoner up the hall. I will make out a warrant for your man's arrest. Massey, as I am a magistrate, I do not wish to swear out the complaint myself. Will you do it for me? Mr. Kennison will look after Sibyl, while Mr. Durand's officers will doubtless take good care of him."

Massey followed the judge into the library. In the latter's desk was an assortment of legal blanks. First a complaint was made out, and Massey swore to it. Thereupon, the judge secured the complaint, and issued a warrant commanding the officers to seize and deliver the body of Calvin Durand.

Returning to the hallway, the judge placed the warrant in the hands of the constables.

"On what charge am I arrested?" demanded Durand, whose anger was at white heat.

"Abduction," answered one of the constables, looking at the face of the warrant.

"Abduction?" he cried. "It is a false charge. I have abducted nobody. I have abducted nothing."

"That question must be settled in court," returned the judge, dryly. "Take him away, officers."

Calvin Durand was led away in charge of the very officers whom he had brought with him to intimidate others. It is seldom advisable to hold the terrors of the law over the head of a magistrate.

"He won't trouble us right away, at any rate," said Judge Willoughby, grimly. "And yet," he added, "I have some doubt as to whether it was right for me to do it."

"Why?" asked Kennison, opening his eyes in intense surprise.

"Because it may look as if I am abusing a power conferred upon me only for the good of the Commonwealth."

"If you were not a magistrate, but still a father, you would have acted just the same if there had been a magistrate within reach, would you not?" questioned Massey.

"Undoubtedly I should do so," answered Judge Willoughby, "and yet, while I feel that I have done no wrong, I have an uncomfortable feeling that I have used my official position for personal purposes. Strange contradiction, isn't it?"

Sibyl had been taken up-stairs again by her aunt, and the men adjourned to the smoking-room, where they discussed and smoked at the same time.

"We have all of us been upset to-day," said the judge, "but to-morrow I shall begin to look after this business in dead earnest. The fall term of the court comes in, in a few days now. I must see that Sibyl's suit for annulment of marriage is entered at once. I shall be on the bench myself, but of course it must be

tried before some other judge. I think I shall ask the lawyer to make every effort to try the case before Partridge. He is an honest, hard-headed old fellow, who does just what he believes to be his duty, and the fact that Sibyl's my daughter won't influence him in the least."

"Do you know whom you will engage for counsel?" asked Massey.

"Yes, I have decided upon the man. His name is G. Edward Alden. He is new to the bar in this State. One of my last acts, before the last term closed, was to admit him to practice, and his surprisingly deep knowledge of all law points struck me at the time. I shall engage him, because I think him the ablest lawyer in this county. Of course you gentlemen will go with me and tell me all you know of the circumstances."

"There is one question," said Massey, "which has troubled me not a little. Can Sibyl, when she meets Durand in court, keep herself free from his influence?"

Judge Willoughby's brow clouded.

"That thought has occurred to me," he admitted. "Of course they must come together in the court-room, and, if he succeeded in keeping her under his influence, it will do much to injure our case, for the poor girl could hardly help giving such testimony as he desired of her."

"I had an object in asking that question," Massey pursued. "I believe I have found a way to break up the influence."

Judge Willoughby started.

"Do not trifle with me, Massey," he cried, hoarsely.

"It would be unlike me to trifle in so grave a matter," Will said, gravely. "I have a theory which I

have been some time in formulating. I should like to prove it to-day, if possible. If I fail on the first trial I shall not despair, but am ready to repeat the effort frequently."

Judge Willoughby leaped to his feet and paced the room excitedly, while Kennison manifested many signs of nervousness and uneasiness. Massey alone seemed calm.

He smoked placidly as he went on to define his theory.

"My plan," he said, "is an old one in other branches of practice, but I have never heard of its being applied to a case like the one we have in hand. I may, perhaps, define the theory as one of counter-irritation.

The judge paused in his walk and looked inquiringly at Will.

"Counter-irritation!" he repeated, vaguely. "I don't believe I understand you, Massey."

"Oh, yes, you do. For instance, if you have a headache you are quite likely to apply a menthol pencil, so-called. If the headache is not an obstinate one it yields readily to the menthol. The cause of the headache is not removed, but, nevertheless, the aching effect is. Why? Because the menthol produces an irritation, which combats the natural irritation of the headache."

Judge Willoughby looked puzzled. The expression did not belie him. He was puzzled.

"It is substantially the same theory which Pasteur uses in treating patients who have been bitten by a rabid animal," Will continued. "M. Pasteur, substantially, innoculates the patient with a virus of a rabies weaker than that of the animal that bit the pa-

tient. Professor Koch is trying to work out the same theory, in another form, for the destruction of the germ, or seed, of consumption.

Again Massey paused, and looked reflectively at the judge's puzzled face.

"Do you follow me now?" he asked.

"I should rather hear you to the end," was the answer.

"Very well," Will answered. "I have been making a study of the subject of hypnotism. The means of producing hypnotic sleep are quite simple if one possesses the power of hypnotizing. I do not know whether I have that power. I am in hopes that I do. Sibyl, being already unusually sensitive to such an influence, will be an easy subject for me to begin with.

"If I can place her under my influence, I shall try, with your permission, of course, to gain as much mastery over her as possible. I believe that, as my influence over her increases, Durand's will decrease. If his power and mind reach the same level, their effect will be to neutralize each other, and then she will be quite free of control by either of us. Even if it doesn't reach this pitch, I am in hope that such hypnotic influences as I can gain over her will lessen the spell which Durand can throw over her, and thus tend to make her more of a free agent than she is at present."

Judge Willoughby did not immediately reply.

It was a bold and ingenious plan, and he could not at once embrace it in its immensity.

When he did at last speak, he said:

"I will confess, my dear Massey that your plan seems plausible. Whether it is really feasible is a point upon which your opinion is worth more than mine. How-

ever, it can readily be demonstrated whether or no we should place reliance in it."

"And at no time like the present," Will promptly responded. "If you will give me full permission to go ahead at once I will do my best to prove that my theory will work well in practice."

"You certainly have my permission," answered the judge.

"Very well, then; will you find your daughter and desire her to come to the library?"

Judge Willoughby left the room and soon returned, saying that Sibyl would come at once.

"I wish you would both conceal yourselves behind the book-case," Will said. "My experiment may come out much better if there are no visible spectators."

They had no more than concealed themselves, when Sibyl entered the library.

"Papa said that you wished to see me."

"Yes"—placing a chair for her. "Will you please be seated. I would like to have a little talk with you."

"Please don't say anything about what happened last night or this afternoon," pleaded Sibyl. "I feel as if I were becoming mad already. I fear there is no way out of the matter but for me to go with Mr. Durand. I am his wife, you know."

She said these last words with a plaintive smile, which seemed to tear at Will's heart.

"But you do not want to go with him," he urged, gently.

"I—I don't know," she answered, hesitatingly. "I have had no mind of my own since I met him. Whatever he wants I must want, I suppose. I wish you would tell papa so. While Mr. Durand wants me I

cannot disobey him. Papa's course is only lengthening my torture, for I know it will end—if it must end—in my going with Mr. Durand and doing whatever he desires of me."

Massey decided that further discussion of this kind would be useless—even harmful—so he came directly to the business in hand.

"I want to try a little experiment," he said, gently. "That is, if you will permit me."

"What kind of an experiment!" she inquired, anxiously.

"I will show you," Will returned, evasively. "I promise you, upon my honor, that it is nothing from which you have anything to fear. Will you promise me?"

"Yes, I will accept your word."

"Let me first," he said, "test the strength of your eyes."

Taking a small cut-glass phial from his pocket, he added:

"I want you to gaze at this just as long as you possibly can. Do not, on any account, take your eyes from it, and keep your mind rigidly on it at the same time."

Sibyl suspected his motive.

"You, too?" she cried, reproachfully, shrinking back from him.

"I do not understand you," said Massey, gently.

"You are trying to gain control over me, are you not?" she asked.

"I am trying what seems to be a simple optical experiment," he responded, thinking it better even to deceive her than to arouse her to resistance.

Holding the glass phial some inches above the level of her eyes, he resumed:

"Now, please gaze at this steadily. So! Don't take your eyes away from it for an instant until I tell you to. And keep your mind upon it at the same time."

In complying, Sibyl threw her head back, and Massey, holding the glittering glass in the same position, stepped behind her.

He watched the pupils of her eyes closely. At first they contracted, to accommodate the eyes to the object.

In a short time the pupils began to relax, however.

Will made a few passes over her face, without touching her soft cheeks.

Gradually Sibyl's eyelids began to fall. Then her eyes were fully closed. Massey made a few more passes, then put the glass in his pocket, and stepped back to contemplate her.

There could be little doubt that she was in a sound sleep.

To make assurance doubly sure, he pricked one of her hands slightly with the point of a pin. The hand was not withdrawn; there was no tremor, and Will was convinced that he had induced a condition of hypnotic sleep.

"You may come out of your hiding-place now," he whispered to the two men behind the book-case.

They came, and looked eagerly at Sibyl.

Her eyes were open now, but there could be no doubt that she was still in the trance.

"Are you afraid of Calvin Durand?" Will asked of Sibyl.

"Yes!"

There was no mistaking the emphasis of the answer.

"No, you are not afraid of him," said Will, positively. "You know that you are not afraid of him. Tell me that you are not."

"I am not," came from Sibyl's lips, so emphatically and defiantly that even Will was surprised.

"See, here is Durand," Will continued, leading Kennison forward. "Tell him that you do not fear him—that you despise him."

Sibyl turned to Kennison.

"I do not fear you; I despise you," she repeated.

"Say, old man," protested Kennison in a whisper, "that's hardly fair, is it? You may make her dislike me."

"That's not at all likely," Massey replied. "She believes you to be Durand, and it is a dislike for Durand only that I wish to arouse. She feels the dislike at heart, but I want to arouse it in her to a strong pitch."

Turning to Sibyl, Will went on:

"Durand laughs at you. He thinks you pretend to be braver than you are. Show him how little you fear him. Strike him and drive him from you."

Sibyl advanced boldly and struck Kennison a smarting bow, which he received without wincing. Then, at a sign from Will, he ran out of the room, pursued as far as the door by Sibyl, who then returned.

But Massey pointed to the judge, saying:

"See! Durand has returned and mocks you. Drive him away once more."

Judge Willoughby, taking the cue, ran out of the room, hotly pursued by Sibyl as far as the door.

"This has gone far enough for one test," Massey decided. Seating Sibyl in the chair again, he breathed in her eyes, and she came out of the trance with a start.

"Where am I," she demanded, looking vaguely about her.

"In the hands of your friends," Massey answered, tenderly.

The library door opened, and Judge Willonghby and Gilbert Kennison re-entered.

CHAPTER XXI.

"GOOD GOD! SHE IS MY DAUGHTER!"

EARLY the next morning Judge Willoughby drove over to the neighboring town to consult with Lawyer Alden. At the judge's request Dr. Massey accompanied him.

Gilbert Kennison remained at the house, for it was barely possible that Calvin Durand would succeed in getting out on bail, and, in that case, it was imperatively necessary to "have a man about the place."

The town to which the judge and his companion drove was one of considerable pretension. The principal street had a row of handsome brick blocks, and in one of these Lawyer Alden had his offices.

They alighted before the office, left Fay with the cart and ascended the stairs which led to the office.

"Is Mr. Alden in?" the judge demanded, of a carroty-topped youth who appeared to fill the rôle of office boy.

"He's in, sir, but very busy. He doesn't want to be disturbed."

"Take my card to him, please," said the judge, who, of course, was familiar with the routine of "getting at" a popular and busy lawyer.

The boy almost immediately reappeared.

"Mr. Alden says for you to step into his office, sir."

They passed through a large room in which three

clerks or students were busily engaged, and then into the office of G. Edward Alden, Esq.

The man who arose and greeted the judge with much cordiality, did not appear to be past middle age, but he was of spare frame and worn-looking, and his hair, though bushy and profuse, was almost snow-white.

"A man who has seen a good deal of trouble," was Massey's mental comment.

"You are heartily welcome, Judge," Alden was saying. "It is not often that a judge on the bench seeks a lawyer, and you are doubly welcome. How can I serve you?"

As the lawyer said this he seated himself, and rapidly put away the papers which had been spread out before him on his desk.

Judge Willoughby did not procrastinate or delay.

"It is safe to say," he began, "that it is one of the most extraordinary cases you ever heard of. The nature of it is a suit for annulment of marriage."

"Nothing very extraordinary in that," returned Alden. "I have already two such cases in order for the next term of court."

"I am coming to the extraordinary part," said Judge Willoughby, and then he went on to give the details of the acquaintance of Sibyl and Calvin Durand, with its final result in their marriage.

"The case is extraordinary, decidedly," Alden agreed.

"Will you undertake it?" asked the judge.

"I shall be glad to. Rare cases of that kind are full of work, and work is the only real rest for a lonely man."

Alden smiled sadly, as he said this, but the expres-

sion soon passed away, and he was again simply the lawyer and nothing more.

Judge Willoughby handed him a check for the retaining fee, and Alden placed it in his pocketbook without looking at it.

"One question, Judge Willoughby," he said. "Is the girl's mother, your wife, alive?"

"My wife is dead," answered the judge, "but she was not Sibyl's mother. In fact, Sibyl is not my child. She came to me from the sea, or rather from the Sound."

Alden grasped the arms of the chair and turned pale.

"Explain yourself!" he gasped.

"It was about twenty years ago," replied the judge. "A steamer was run down, but all on board, with two exceptions, reached the shore. Those two, the captain and a passenger, lost their lives in saving the rest. The passenger who thus perished was, as I was told, the father of Sibyl."

Lawyer Alden sprang from his chair, exclaiming:

"GOOD GOD! SHE IS MY DAUGHTER!"

Judge Willoughby and Massey stared at him in sheer amazement, but Alden cooled down, and sank back into his chair.

"Go on," he said hoarsely.

"Sibyl and her mother were brought to my house," resumed Judge Willoughby, as soon as he himself could choke back his surprise. "I had a summer house on the Sound then. The mother died in the morning, but through the night she repeatedly called for 'Gerald.'"

"That's my Christian name," interposed Alden, who sat with his eyes immovably fixed on the judge's coun-

tenance. "And so my poor wife died from the shock. I knew that, for I went to the spot a few years ago, and the villagers pointed out my wife's grave to me. They told me that my baby daughter had been buried with her."

Alden's eyes were filled with tears now. Judge Willoughby's eyes were not less moist.

Dr. Massey had pushed his chair back into the shadow of a corner, where he was hardly visible.

"The baby did not die," the judge went on, after awhile. "My wife made the strongest efforts to save its life, and succeeded. We adopted it, and we loved it as our own child. Since the day when my wife died Sibyl has been all in all to me."

"And how did you know that the child's name was Sibyl?" demanded Alden.

"It was embroidered on the baby's clothing," replied the judge.

Gerald Alden leaned forward and grasped the judge's hand.

"Judge Willoughby, it was through you that my child was spared and brought up to womanhood. Before Heaven I thank you, and I shall never cease to feel all the gratitude that man can toward you."

"Do you think it possible that there can be any mistake?" asked the judge, brokenly.

"None," was the answer. "I will tell you the name of the steamer. It was the *Nĕhawmet*, Captain Walters, master."

"It was," Judge Willoughby assented.

"And I can prove my story by Captain Walters," Alden went on. "He is still alive, and in the Pacific Mail service. He touches New York every few weeks

from the Isthmus. I have kept up my acquaintance with him ever since I accidentally met him one day, fifteen years ago. He can identify me."

There was a long pause, in which the ticking of the office clock was the only sound.

At last, as if by sudden thought, Alden plunged one hand into the breast of his coat and drew forth a small locket.

With trembling fingers he opened it, and handed it to Judge Willoughby.

"That is the portrait of my wife," he said, in an unsteady voice. "Tell me, does Sibyl look anything like her?"

Judge Willoughby took the locket, glanced at the tiny miniature, and uttered an exclamation of so great amazement that Massey ran to his side.

The sweet, serious face smiling at him from the miniature seemed Sibyl's own. And, in the other half of the locket, was a wisp of hair of the same shade as Sibyl's.

Alden watched them eagerly.

"Does Sibyl look anything like her?" he repeated.

"The likeness is wonderful," Judge Willoughby replied.

With a cry that was full of great joy, Gerald Alden's head fell forward in his arms, and rested upon his desk.

"God, I thank thee," he murmured.

When he lifted his face again tears were streaming from his eyes.

"There can be no doubt, Judge Willoughby, that you have saved my child for me in my later days. I will take her case. I will never cease work upon it

until I have won it. It shall be the one effort of my life, greater and stronger than all others."

Another pause followed.

Alden at length became calmer, and then he resumed:

"Of course, you will want to know what happened to me; and why, in all these years, I have not sooner found my child. I will tell you my story."

"When the *Nehawmet* went to the bottom, I seized a plank and kept afloat. But the water chilled me fearfully, and it was only by the most frantic efforts that I was able to keep my hold. I drifted about on the water and felt every moment that the next wave would wash me from the plank.

"I heard some one calling and tried desperately to answer, but my teeth chattered so that I could hardly make an articulate sound. This discovery filled me with despair. I felt that I was lost, and yet a miraculous power seemed to enable me to hold on.

"How long I had drifted I shall never know. The deck officer of a passing sailing vessel saw me, and I was taken aboard. The vessel was bound for South America. A fever seized me, and for a month I hovered between life and a grave in the ocean. When I at last recovered, all recollection of the past deserted me.

"I was a physical man once more, though my mind was a blank. I obeyed the officers of the vessel well enough, and was enrolled as one of the crew. I was aboard that vessel for three years. One day I fell from the rigging to the deck. The blow stunned me, and, though I was not seriously injured, the effect of the fall kept me in my berth several days.

"One morning I awoke, and poignant memories of

the past came over me with a rush. My mind had been restored to me, and I was myself, Gerald Alden, once more.

"The vessel was nearing New York, on a homeward cruise. I went to the captain, and told him my story. In return, he told me how I had been picked up in the Sound three years before. Judge, if you can, my impatience to reach New York. The captain manfully paid me my three years' arrears of wages.

"I remained in New York only long enough to purchase decent attire, and then went to the spot of the *Nehawmet* disaster. Alas! I found only what was unquestionably my wife's grave, though she had died there nameless. And the people of the village told me that my baby had been buried at her side."

"That was undoubtedly a mere mistake on their part," suggested the judge. "They could have had no motive in purposely deceiving you."

"It probably was a mistake," assented Alden. "But what a mistake! All these years it has kept me from my child. For I never doubted that the baby had perished with its mother."

"How shall we bring about a meeting between you and your daughter?" queried the judge, after a while.

"Then you do not question that she is my daughter?" demanded Alden, eagerly.

"I see no reason to," was the answer.

Alden grasped the judge's hand again.

"Thank you," he said, simply. "You are a man. I can prove the whole of my extraordinary story, even to Captain Walters, who did not perish; but it is kind of you, sir, to put no obstacles in my way. I shall not take her from you, Judge Willoughby."

And then, at the lawyer's request, all of the points of the case were again gone over, the judge and Massey giving even the minutest facts in their possession.

"This will be a sensational case," said Alden, musingly. "It is the first time, in this State certainly, that the subject of hypnotism has entered so prominently into a case. But there can be no doubt that the court will pronounce judgment in our favor. It would never do to establish a precedent by which men possessed of this evil power could roam about, marrying whoever they chose without the consent of anyone, not even that of the lady herself. But, by the way, Doctor Massey, are you sure that you can sufficiently influence Sibyl to enable her to face this Durand fellow in court, and not fear him, or be controlled by him?"

"I do not flatter myself that I have yet reached that point," Will answered, "but I shall not cease these tests until the day comes for the trial of the case. By that time I have no doubt that I shall be able to prove the truth of my theory by showing you that Miss Willoughby can face the fellow, and give her testimony clearly and decisively."

"God grant that you may," said Alden, fervently.

"Amen to that," from the judge.

"And now," said Judge Willoughby, with visible emotion again in his voice, "the doctor and I will return. Will you, Mr. Alden, come with us and be presented to your daughter?"

The lawyer was silent for a few moments.

The working of his face betrayed his agitation.

"I—I think I had better not," he said. "If little Sibyl is as ill and shaken up as you say she is, it strikes me that to discover her father is still living, and to

meet him face to face, would be too great a shock for her. No, Judge, I think it better that she should know nothing of this until our case is won, and she is once more happy. Then let her have the further happiness of meeting her father, if it will be much happiness for her to meet a father whom she has never known."

"But you will want to see her?" said the judge.

"In connection with this business? Yes. I will go to work at once upon the necessary papers. Bring her here to-morrow morning, to sign them. Between now and then I will school myself to meet her calmly. Good-morning, gentlemen. You have brought happiness into my life which I little expected. By the way, Judge Willoughby, here is the check which you handed me. Even a lawyer wants no money for pleading the cause of his own child."

As they did not care to be overheard by Fay, who sat stiff and rigid on the back seat, Judge Willoughby and Massey did not discuss the wonderful discovery of the morning while on their way home.

When they had reached the house Judge Willoughby said in a low tone:

"For the present, Massey, you and I had better keep our secret strictly to ourselves. I shall not tell even my sister, at present."

That afternoon Sibyl gave herself up to another hypnotic test in Massey's hands. The judge was present again, and highly delighted at the results.

"I feel confident that I shall be able to do all that I have hoped for," Massey said to him afterwards.

"I have no doubt that you will," was the delighted answer.

On the following morning they took Sibyl to Alden's office.

The lawyer was looking even paler than on the preceding day, and his eyes gave evidence of little sleep, yet he received Sibyl with a calmness which tallied but little with his inward feelings.

"I have prepared all the necessary papers," he said, producing several documents. "Please sign on the lines which I will point out to you."

This done, Alden turned to the judge.

"Will you please receive her oath that the statements she has signed are, to the best of her knowledge, true?"

Judge Willoughby received her sworn statement, and certified to it on the papers.

Then they took their departure, and Gerald Alden, from his window, watched the carriage roll away.

"God bless her!" he cried. "How much she is like her mother! Oh Flora, Flora, I shall work for our child. She shall be a happy woman yet!"

Several times Sibyl visited his office, in company with the judge and Massey, and he was always the same. Never did she see in him anything which caused her to suspect their very near relation.

Massey, meanwhile, kept on with the tests, and he was satisfied that Durand's control over her was gone.

At last came the day on which all the interested parties met in the court-room.

The sensational case of Durand *vs.* Durand was on, and the stuffy court-room and corridors were crowded with curious people.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BATTLE OF THE LAWYERS.

CALVIN DURAND was in the court-room early—under the watchful eye of a constable, for he had not secured bail on the charge of abduction.

He looked eagerly about him, at first. He saw plenty of people whom he knew, but knew only in a social way.

Yes, there was one other—Lise d'Armettre, who sat deeply veiled in the first row of seats for spectators. It was she who had gone to the nearest large city and secured his counsel for him—a little nervous man with eagle eyes, who had the reputation of being able to shake a witness into pieces on cross-examination. The lawyer's name was Watts.

Sibyl, the only person whom Durand really sought to see, was no where in the court-room.

Her lawyer was there, though, in his place inside the rail, and busily scanning a set of papers.

A few minor cases received decisions that had been reserved, and then Judge Partridge, through his clerk, announced that the court would hear the case of Durand *vs.* Durand, an action for annulment of marriage contract.

A buzz of excitement traveled rapidly around the court-room, and everybody leaned forward, mouths agape.

The door of one of the ante-rooms now opened, and Sibyl entered on the arm of Judge Willoughby.

She wore a severe, but dainty black costume, which enhanced the unnatural pallor of her face. As she took her place inside the rail she looked neither to the right nor the left.

Durand also—followed by the constable—took up a position inside the rail, beside Lawyer Watts.

There was a space of eight feet between him and Sibyl.

Durand furtively sought her eye, but could not get her to look in his direction.

Then Massey and Kennison came in and sat between them, so that Sibyl was behind friendly shelter.

The hum of conversation throughout the room was stopped when the clerk, in a dull monotonous way, began to read the paper in the case.

Judge Partridge believed in pushing matters. As soon as the clerk's voice had died away his honor called upon the counsel for the libelant to begin his case at once.

Gerald Alden, pale but composed, was prepared to make the greatest effort of his life.

Rising to his feet and addressing the court, he began in low tones, which gradually increased in volume, to give the outlines of his client's case.

He began with the time when Durand first began to call at Judge Willoughby's, touched strongly upon the hypnotic test in the library, the subsequent futile effort of Miss Willoughby to escape the attention of Durand, the abduction, the marriage and subsequent events.

Through it all Gerald Alden spoke with an eloquent

emotion which appealed to the hearts—if not the heads—of court and spectators alike.

There was a deathlike stillness in the stuffy room when Lawyer Alden finished with a statement of what he proposed to prove.

Judge Partridge then waited a few moments for the counsel on the other side to make an opening address in answer.

"Have you nothing to say, Mr Watts?" the court demanded at last.

"Nothing, if it please your honor. We are willing to let the other side do the talking."

"Mr. Alden, bring on your witnesses, and have them sworn," directed the court.

Judge Willoughby was the first to testify. He gave a graphic narrative of Durand's early visits to his house, of the hypnotic tests, of the marriage during his absence from home, and of Durand's subsequent efforts to get possession of his "wife."

Then Lawyer Watts took the judge in hand for cross-examination.

"Repeat that scene in the library," he desired.

Judge Willoughby gave a succinct account of Durand's hypnotic test, which did not differ from his original testimony.

"How do you know that your daughter was hypnotized?" demanded Watts.

"I do not know it positively," returned Judge Willoughby.

"Then why do you ask the court to give credence to such a story?"

"I have stated things as they seemed to me."

"Then you do not know that your daughter was hypnotized?"

"No."

"All right, sir," retorted Watts. "Since you do not know what you are testifying to be true, you may step down."

Alden nodded to the judge, who stepped down, and Lawyer Watts looked at the judge on the bench with a smile which seemed to say: "You shall see the rest of these ten-pins knocked down in the same way."

Then Dr. Willard Massey was called. He gave his testimony for the libelant, and then Watts took him in hand.

"You are a physician, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you presume to say that, on the occasion of the test in the library, which has been so graphically described, you saw Miss Willoughby—Mrs. Durand now—under the influence of hypnotism?"

"I am sure that I did," answered Will.

"You will swear to that, Doctor?"

"Yes; I will swear to it."

"Then, Doctor, I shall have to ask you to tell the court just what hypnotism is—its cause, etc."

Massey smiled.

"That is a question, sir, which a whole medical faculty cannot answer. It is not yet known just what hypnotism is."

"Then, Doctor Massey," said Watts, severely, "you have come into court, to-day, to swear to something of which you do not even know the nature. Am I right? Answer me promptly!"

"You have put the question unfairly," answered Will.

Lawyer Watts seemed highly indignant as he retorted:

"Doctor Massey, you come into court as a physician. You swear that, on a certain occasion, the libelant was under hypnotic influence. Yet, when I ask you to define hypnotism, you frankly confess that you do not know what it is. How, in the name of all that is truthful, then, can you have the assurance to make such statements as you have made under oath?"

"A physician can tell the effect of hypnotism, even though he cannot define the nature of the agency," Will answered.

"That is not what I asked you," stormed Watts.

"Will the court rule that it is?" cried Gerald Alden, springing to his feet.

There was a momentary pause.

Judge Partridge's stolid, impenetrable face betrayed no sympathy with either side. The court soon gave a ruling, however.

"Mr. Watts, since you are examining a technical witness, an expert, you must not try to get misinformation out of him by confusing him. The witness cannot answer all your questions in an instant. You must give him time to think what he wishes to say."

"Your honor," replied Lawyer Watts, "I am seeking to make the witness admit that he does not know what he is talking about."

"But there can be no question that he does know what he is talking about," the court returned, sharply.

Lawyer Watts, therefore, had but one or two unimportant questions to ask before he permitted Massey to step down from the witness stand.

A murmur of intense excitement ran through the room as Gerald Alden called Sibyl to the stand.

On the direct examination she told her story in a plain, simple way, that carried conviction with it.

When she came to cross-examination at the hands of Watts that wily lawyer used his most confusing questions and his most blustering manner to force the witness into discrediting her own testimony.

But he went too far. Judge Partridge interposed:

"As long as I sit on the bench of this court, Mr. Watts, no attorney shall bullyrag a woman as you are trying to do. Have a care, sir. You must use respectful language toward women if you wish to continue in the conduct of this case."

The spectators looked to see Watts abashed. He was not, however; lawyers of his class seldom are.

When Sibyl was through testifying, Gerald Alden said:

"Your honor, since my brother on the other side has endeavored to discredit the whole subject of hypnotism, I shall beg to introduce testimony which I had hoped would be unnecessary."

Thereupon three grave looking men came forward and were sworn. Two were from Harvard College and the third was a German savant sojourning for a few months in this country.

The witnesses were all profound men. They had made a study of hypnotism in all its forms, and under its multiplicity of names. As well as they were able they described the nature of the agency, and as to its existence and effects they were unanimous and positive.

Lawyer Watts endeavored to confuse these witnesses on cross-examination, but he did not enjoy it. They

were precise and thoughtful in all their statements and could not be hurried in the least.

Feeling that he had presented a good array of evidence on the hypnotic side of the case, Gerald Alden then devoted himself to proving the abduction and the marriage of Sibyl while in a trance.

While Sibyl was on the stand Alden suddenly said:

"Look at that man, please," pointing to Durand. "Is he the man to whom you were married on that night?"

Durand gazed piercingly at her, trying with all his strength to regain that mysterious control which he had exercised over her of old.

Sybil betrayed some agitation, but looked at him without fear.

She might have winced—might have broken down—were it not that Massey too was striving against Durand for the control.

"Yes, that is the man," she answered, slowly and distinctly.

Durand whispered to Watts, and the latter turned to the court.

"If it pleases your honor, my client would like to address a few questions to the witness."

"He may do so," replied Judge Partridge.

At this Will Massey moved still nearer to Sibyl, and fixed his eyes steadily on her. The crisis in the case had come. If he failed her, Durand might yet win the day.

Calvin Durand was also conscious that the critical moment had come. Throwing almost superhuman energy into the effort to subdue her will, he asked:

"Did you not go willingly with me to the church the night we were married?"

"I had no choice in the matter," she replied, looking squarely into Durand's eyes.

"Sibyl, do you mean to say that, when I proposed an elopement, you did not fall readily in with my plan?"

"You did not propose it," she retorted, defiantly. "You ordered me to do it."

There was a flutter of sensation through the court-room.

"If you were not perfectly willing to go with me, why did you permit me to suppose that you were, and why did you go with me?"

"Because I had no choice but to obey you. You were my master, then, and you boasted of it to me."

Durand, to judge by the expression of his face, was deeply pained at these answers.

"Sibyl," he said, gently, "is it possible that you do not love me now?"

"I do not," she answered, haughtily, drawing herself up to her full height. "I never did. I always loathed you, and I have told you so before."

Lawyer Watts now thought it time to interfere, and asked Sibyl to step down.

When the other witnesses had testified regarding the abduction, the evidence was all in for the libelant.

Durand then took the stand in his own behalf. The story he told was seemingly so straightforward that many of the spectators began to believe what Lawyer Watts tried to prove, in that both Durand and Sibyl were the innocent victims of a conspiracy on the part of her relatives and friends to separate them.

The only witness Durand had to support him was

the clergyman who had performed the ceremony. He told the story of the marriage simply, and it was only when he came to be cross-examined by Gerald Alden that his evidence became interesting.

"Did you not think at the time that the libelant seemed unlike herself?" inquired Alden.

"I had no previous acquaintance with the lady, and cannot tell," was the answer.

"Did she seem to go through the ceremony of her own free will?"

"She made the responses promptly enough," was the rector's reply.

"Do you believe in hypnotism?" demanded Alden.

"I am inclined to."

"You have heard experts testify to-day as to the appearance and conduct of a person in a trance. Do you think that the libelant appeared to be in such a trance?"

"I object," interposed Lawyer Watts loudly. "We want only facts. What the witness thinks is not material evidence."

"The witness may answer the question," decided the judge. "The value of the evidence can be decided afterwards."

"Answer my question, witness," said Alden.

"Yes," admitted the rector, "I now believe that the lady was under hypnotic influence at the time the ceremony was performed."

After some further wrangling the lawyers decided that the evidence for both sides was in.

Lawyer Watts then began a harangue, in which he denounced the whole affair as a conspiracy against his client, and endeavored to adapt the evidence to the claims that he made.

It was a vigorous and brilliant plea that he made, and the spectators, ready to swerve to either side, began to believe that Calvin Durand would triumph.

But when it came Gerald Alden's turn to claim the attention of the court the audience was electrified. He began in a slow, dispassionate way, but increased in vehemence and eloquence until his words held every one spellbound.

Never had the people heard such a plea from a lawyer.

Even the gruff old judge on the bench felt that it was many years since he had heard the like of the man before him.

Only two people in all that throng knew that Gerald Alden was making this grand plea for the happiness of his daughter.

When at last he sat down, covered with perspiration and deathly pale, the audience broke forth with wild applause, which it required great effort on the part of the court officers to subdue.

Judge Willoughby went over to Alden, grasped his hand and whispered:

"You have done nobly. God will bless you."

Then, returning to his adopted daughter's side, the judge said tenderly:

"It is over for to-day. To-morrow the court will give its decision. Let us go home, my darling."

CHAPTER XXIII.

TWO DECREES—ONE BY JUSTICE, ONE BY CUPID.

THERE was a distinct change in Sibyl as soon as she left the court-room.

She and the judge, Kennison and Massey, were driven home by Fay in the roomy and comfortable family carriage.

"How beautiful this autumn day is," she murmured, looking delightedly about her at the myriad of ever-changing hues of the foliage of the trees.

Her hearers silently thanked heaven that she was once more alive to the beauties of nature, a sure sign of a comparatively easy mind.

At home, in the evening, she seemed once more her happy self. After dinner she spent a considerable portion of the evening in singing and playing, another happy omen of her recovery to good spirits.

"It all seemed so strange to-day," she said to Massey at one time. "The minute I faced Durand in court, it seemed as if the scales suddenly dropped from my eyes. I was able to face him at last, without fearing him, and without succumbing to him. Of a sudden, in a moment, I found myself free from his terrible influence, and I shall never fear him again. Oh, I am so happy!"

She looked happy—radiantly happy.

Her face, thinned by suffering, had not yet regained

its roundness of outline, but the wonted color was there, and her eyes sparkled like gems.

"I believe," said Massey, "that you have all along exaggerated this fellow's power over you. A thorough resistance to him might have availed you earlier."

"No, I know it would not," she answered, earnestly. "I tried with my whole strength to defy him, but he only laughed at my vain efforts. You are too modest, Doctor Massey. We all know that it is to you, and to you alone, that my successful defiance of his power to-day was due."

"Yes, I had hoped that my theory would succeed in practice, and yet I will confess that this morning I awaited the result with fear and trembling. It so often happens, you know, that an ingenious theory fails at the critical moment of test."

"I am devoutly grateful, Doctor Massey, that yours did not fail. To its success I shall owe whatever of happiness there may be for me in the future. If I had not been able to look Calvin Durand fearlessly in the eye to-day, I should never have felt safe from him as long as we both lived."

"And are you not afraid that you will now fall into my power?" Will asked, smilingly. "You know, I have succeeded in mesmerizing you."

"No, I am not at all afraid of you, Doctor Massey," she replied, with simple earnestness. "Now that Durand is powerless," she added, "you are powerless, also. You two neutralize each other, as far as I am concerned."

"That certainly was the theory under which I labored," Will replied. "And I am glad it is so."

"Because you would hesitate to accept responsibility for my actions?" she demanded, merrily.

"No," answered Will, with extraordinary earnestness, even for him; "because I believe that no one has any right to attempt the exercise of such control over another. It destroys the God-given boon of free agency and sole responsibility of each one for his own acts. And because it is cowardly to seek to compel others to do only as we wish them to do."

At this point Massey branched off to another subject, for fear of unduly exciting Sibyl by keeping her mind too long on Durand.

At breakfast, the next morning, Judge Willoughby announced that he must make an early start for the neighboring town.

"I played truant yesterday, but there are cases today which I must hear. As I cannot be back before dark, had you better not go over with me, Massey, and bring back the decree in our little woman's affair?"

"Will it not be necessary for Miss Willoughby to appear in person?" Will inquired.

"No, not at all; Alden can attend to everything that remains to be done. But you can learn the verdict, and bring it back with you. In a couple of hours from the time court opens, you can be back here with the news."

"Then I will go with you only too gladly," answered Massey.

Judge Partridge's court always opened on time, to the minute.

Judge Willoughby went directly to his own session, saying that he could send down a court officer to learn the result of the verdict.

Massey was on hand a few minutes before the opening time.

Calvin Durand was also there, under the watchful eye of the constable.

Gerald Alden was there too.

His face was pale from suspense, and the condition of his eyes betrayed how sleepless his night had been.

Alden was absently whittling at a pencil which he had started to sharpen. His eyes lit up with an expression of genuine pleasure when he saw Massey crossing the room.

"You have come to hear the decree?" he said. "I am positive of victory, and yet I have not slept at all, from a vague apprehension that the judge might decide against us."

Lawyer Watts entered at this moment. Stepping briskly up to Durand, he slapped him on the shoulder and said:

"Don't look so downcast, man. The verdict is sure to be in our favor. We have put in a clean case, and there's no hope for the other side."

"Do you really believe that?" Massey and Alden heard Durand ask of his counsel.

"Believe it?" repeated the other. "Why, man, I know it."

"Why, have you heard?" asked Durand, eagerly.

"Heard? No. No need to. We put in a clear case of conspiracy yesterday, though we didn't trump up so many witnesses as the other side did."

Lawyer Watts sat down, thrust his hands into his pockets and studied the ceiling with a complacent stare.

When the hands of the court-room clock pointed to

nine, one of the officers pounded the floor with his staff.

"The court!" he cried, and all present rose to their feet, while Judge Partridge entered and took his seat on the bench.

With breathless interest those who had large matters at stake waited and listened, while the clerk read rapidly a list of judgments given by the court.

At last his dull, routine voice was heard in these words:

"Durand *vs.* Durand! An action for the annulment of the marriage contract, at the prayer of the wife, Sibyl Durand, against Calvin Durand. The court decides that the libelant was improperly and illegally coerced into a marriage which cannot, therefore, be recognized as legal and valid. The court, therefore, decrees annulment of said contract for the libelant."

It was over.

The terrible sinking feeling which had come over Will Massey when he first heard the names pronounced, was now succeeded by a feeling of great exhilaration.

He longed to throw up his hat and give vent to wild cheers. It was lucky he didn't, though, for there is no knowing how many months of confinement grim Judge Partridge would have given him for such flagrant contempt of court.

As for Gerald Alden, he had stood with great drops of cold perspiration on his brow while the decree was being read.

When it was over he sank into his chair, and covered his eyes with his handkerchief.

Strange conduct for a lawyer, the unsympathetic spectators must have thought.

Lawyer Watts seemed surprised, for a brief instant. Then he accepted the decision with a philosophical calmness that was strangely at variance with Durand's thunderstruck appearance. The cheering words of his lawyer had led him to expect victory, and this was utter defeat.

He had lost Sibyl. He had lost the fortune which he confidently expected to win through her. At one blow his fine castle in the air had collapsed and disappeared.

"You told me the verdict was sure to be in my favor," he whispered to Watts.

"I surely thought it would be," returned the lawyer, easily. "As it is, my friend, I am very sorry that things have turned out so."

"Can't we fight this matter further?" Durand demanded, after a moment's thought.

"Don't see how we can, my dear fellow," was Watts' sympathetic reply. "The judgment of this court practically settles the matter, and seals it. If we take an appeal to the Supreme Court I don't see that we have a leg left to stand on. I can't think of a single exception to take to the proceedings of this court. I really think, my dear fellow, you had better let the matter rest where it is."

Durand was gloomily silent.

The lawyer's words left him not one ray of hope.

As Massey rose to depart he cast one look at his vanquished foe.

Durand returned the look with one of blackest hatred.

Will parted company with Gerald Alden in the corridor.

"When are you coming to present yourself to your daughter?" Will asked, with deep feeling.

"I do not know; perhaps to-night, perhaps to-morrow. Heaven knows it is all I can do to keep from rushing to her now, but I fear to give her too sudden a shock. I shall talk it over with Judge Willoughby while his court is taking recess."

Outside, Will found Michael Fay and the horses.

"What does the judge say, Docthor dear?" demanded the coachman, earnestly.

"He has set aside the marriage," Will answered, quietly.

Fay broke out into extravagant demonstrations of joy at hearing this, and ended up with:

"W'u'dn't I loike to see that feller Durand's face now!"

Michael's wish was gratified, for a constable came out of the court-room, and, at his side, walked Calvin Durand.

Michael gazed after this pair for a moment, and then solemnly muttered:

"May Misther Durand walk that way through life! —though faith, 'tis hard on the constable, it is."

Massey did not feel like reproving Fay for so revengeful a wish, but jumped into the carriage, and the faithful fellow drove like mad, so anxious was he to have Miss Sibyl know the good news.

As they drove up to the house, Massey espied her, walking across the lawn, followed by the dogs, Fancy and Nero.

"Hold up, Michael," he cried; and, hardly waiting for the horses to come to a stop, he leaped from the carriage and ran across the lawn.

"You hardly need to tell me anything," said Sibyl.

"Your face alone tells me that you are the bearer of good news."

"The best of news," he replied, joyfully. "Miss Willoughby, the case is decided, and you are free in name as well as in fact. Calvin Durand is defeated."

"For which I thank you," Sibyl answered, gently, her eyes filling with tears of happiness.

"Thank me?" Massey repeated.

"Yes, Doctor Massey; because, but for you, I should have been forced into going with that man. Because, but for you, I could never have successfully faced him in court. But for you I should still be Calvin Durand's wife, without hope of escape or happiness. But, Doctor Massey, thanks to you I am very happy to-day!"

They had walked along until they had come to a field.

Massey helped her over the wall, and they walked onward, strolling about like two happy children.

"I must see Mr. Alden, and thank him for his endeavors in my behalf," she said. "I am sure that much was due to his skilful conduct of the case."

"I have no doubt you will see him very soon," Will replied.

"Why?"

"He is coming here soon. Judge Willoughby has invited him to call."

"I shall be glad to see him."

"How glad, perhaps you little know," Will murmured to himself.

They came to a wall on the crest of a hill.

Below them they could look across a peaceful country landscape of fields and woods, with here and there signs of life.

"See," said Sibyl, "the dogs have crouched down,

and mean to rest awhile. Can we do better than to sit on the wall here and imitate them?"

They seated themselves, gazed about for a few moments with a few comments, and then both were silent.

Will gazed lovingly, jealously even, at the now bright, happy face of the girl beside him.

He had not intended to say it—at all events not so soon—but the words seemed to rise to his lips despite himself.

"Sibyl," he began slowly, with a choking feeling in his throat, and a consciousness that he was turning very red, "on a less happy day I asked you to be my wife, and you refused me. I ask you again. May I hope for a reply which shall make me happier than your other one did?"

Sibyl's face, too, was rosier than it had been a moment before. She looked away at first, then turned and looked frankly into his eyes.

"I suppose, Will, the least I can do is to say 'Yes;' that is, if you will consider that as a reward," she answered, softly.

"A reward for what?" he asked.

"For what you have done for us," was the answer.

"Sibyl, I ask for nothing as a reward," was his earnest response. "I would not have you marry me through gratitude. If you cannot love me, then I can ask for nothing at your hands."

An expression of deep pain rested in Will's eyes as he turned his face away.

Sibyl looked at him covertly, while a bright smile stole into her face.

A soft hand crept into his, and a sweet, low voice said :

"Do not look at me, Will, until I give you permission. No, don't look! I have something to say to you. If I marry you, it will be as much through love as through gratitude."

Will had disregarded her injunction "not to look."

He was looking straight into her eyes now, and there he read the truth of what she had said.

Will remembered that they stood on an eminence, where they were likely to be seen by chance passers-by. Only this thought restrained him from embracing her. But he seized her hands, and looked so long and eagerly into her eyes that her gaze fell.

"My darling!" he cried. "When did you discover that you loved me?"

"I—I—I don't know," she answered, dubiously, "I have certainly known it for the last two or three days."

* * * * * *

When Judge Willoughby returned late in the afternoon Gerald Alden was with him, looking pale and excited.

The judge led his guest into the library and then sent for Sibyl.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT HAPPENED THEN.

SIBYL had just returned from another walk with Will Massey.

Both were so happy that they chafed at the confinement of the house. They had strolled off after luncheon, and only the gathering darkness warned them that they must turn their steps homeward again.

"Your father wants to see you in the library, miss," said one of the servants, almost as soon as she had reached her room.

"Say to papa that I will keep him only a few moments," she answered, and hurriedly exchanged the dusty walking dress for one more suited to the evening.

When she entered the library Judge Willoughby was walking up and down with his hands behind his back, and he wore an air of great gravity.

Gerald Alden was standing at one of the windows, staring out into the darkness, but he turned as soon as he heard the door open, and his eyes rested greedily on Sibyl.

Neither of the men spoke at once.

Sibyl, after waiting for a few moments, looked inquiringly from one to the other.

"Sibyl," said the judge at last, and then faltered. "Ahem! Mr. Alden has brought you the papers certifying to the annulment of the marriage."

"Here they are," said Alden, handing them to her nervously.

He looked at her so strangely that Sibyl, by intuition, wondered what these men were keeping from her.

She took the little packet of papers, and held them, without looking at them.

"Mr. Alden," she said, tremulously, "I owe you a heavy burden of gratitude for the cleverness and the zeal with which you have managed my case from the beginning. Papa says it is not every lawyer who would throw so much energy and vigor into a case in which he had no personal interest."

"Did Judge Willoughby tell you, then, I had no personal interest in your case?" Alden asked, fixing his eyes upon her.

"I do not remember, sir, that he said it in so many words, but that was the idea I gathered from what he said. I assure you I shall never forget your very great kindness, Mr. Alden."

Alden looked at her irresolutely for a few moments, and then, turning to the judge, he said:

"You must tell her, Willoughby. I am afraid she would hardly believe me."

Sibyl, more puzzled than ever, looked again from one to the other.

The judge saw that he could no longer postpone what he had to say to her, though he racked his brains for a way that should not give her too sudden a shock.

After making several ineffectual efforts, Judge Willoughby led her to a sofa, and sat down beside her, while Gerald Alden stood close by, as if afraid to let Sibyl remain out of his sight.

"My dear little woman," the judge began, tenderly,

"you have known for a great many years that you were not my own child. Though you have been as dear to me as my own flesh and blood, you were born of parents you have never seen."

The judge paused, while great drops of perspiration stood out on his face.

Sibyl looked at him, and an expression of vague alarm rested on her own face.

"Yes, papa; I have known this ever since I was old enough to understand it. My real father and mother perished in a steamboat accident on Long Island Sound; or, rather, my father did, while my mother died under your roof a few hours later. And you were good enough to adopt me, and you have always been a dear and true father to me."

"Sibyl, my child," asked the judge, quickly, "have you ever wondered if either of your parents survived?"

Sibyl started, and paled.

She looked keenly at the judge and saw that he had much more to tell her.

"What is this mystery?" she cried. "Tell me at once, I beg of you. If there is anything I should know about my parents, do not keep me in this suspense."

The weight of the revelation he had to make was too much for the judge.

His voice was husky when he spoke next.

"Sibyl, Mr. Alden shall tell you the rest. Believe all that he says to you, for it will be true. I would tell you myself, but find that I cannot."

Gerald Alden seemed agitated, too, but he assumed the task readily.

Sibyl had risen, and was facing him anxiously.

"Please be seated, Miss Willoughby," he said, and drew a chair for himself at her side.

"Miss Willoughby," he began, gravely, but with a tremor in his tones, "what I have to tell you will astonish you not a little, I am convinced. Nevertheless, it is the truth, as I can prove to you, if you need any assurance when I am done.

"Sibyl, it is unfortunately true that your mother is dead. It is not by any means true that your father is dead. He is living at this moment, and is longing as only a parent can to claim his daughter. He is nearer to you than you think."

"Then why is he not here?" she asked, faintly, her face deathly pale.

"Sibyl, your father is here. He stands before you now, and asks you to believe that you are his daughter."

A long, piercing look into his eyes satisfied her that Alden was not in jest—a thing she had feared was only too probable.

"Do you—do you—you mean to tell me that you—you——"

Judge Willoughby arose briskly, and laid a hand on the shoulder of either.

"Yes, Sibyl, Gerald Alden is your father. He is the same hero whose presence of mind was testified to by those who got ashore as having saved their lives on that terrible night twenty years ago. By and by he will tell you how it happened that he has never found his daughter in all these years. Now, my darling, I will leave you with your own father, and may you find him a far better parent than I have succeeded in being."

Ere the judge had finished, father and daughter

were in each other's arms, and Judge Willoughby felt that the situation was too sacred for any on-looker.

He accordingly quitted the room, his honest old eyes filled with a moisture which rarely came to them.

In the hallway at the bottom of the stairs, he encountered Will Massey, who was just coming down.

"Is Sibyl with her father?" asked the younger man.

"Yes."

"When can we join them?" queried Massey.

"Why, directly, I suppose," answered the judge, wondering why Massey felt that there was any necessity to join them so soon after their reunion.

"If you think there is anything strange in my question," said Massey, "it shall be soon explained to you."

For a quarter of an hour thay did not intrude upon Sibyl and her new-found father, but at the end of that time the judge knocked very softly on the library door.

"Come in," said two voices at once.

The judge and Massey entered.

"Doctor Massey knows your secret, Sibyl, my dear," said the judge. "In fact, I believe he knew it before you did."

"Then why did he not tell me?" she asked, reproachfully.

"Why, in that respect, he is only guilty of a crime in which Alden and myself also shared," answered the judge.

"But he should have told me," insisted Sibyl. "Doctor Massey had no right to keep from me a secret that has made me so happy."

"Doctor Massey had no right to keep a secret from you?" repeated the judge. "My dear little woman,

there is some mystery here. Explain yourself, I demand."

"I have two fathers, now," Sibyl said, "and to you both I must beg to present my affianced husband, Doctor Willard Massey."

At this announcement both of the elder men looked more pleased than astonished.

"I congratulate you both," said the judge, heartily.

"And I beg to do the same," added Gerald Alden.

"In my case my intended husband must ask the consent of two fathers," Sibyl cried, gayly. "And now, gentlemen," turning once more to the two elder men, "do you understand why it is that Doctor Massey has no moral or other right to keep a secret from me?"

* * * * * *

Early the next morning the demands of duty carried the judge off to court once more, but Gerald Alden had determined to take a few days of vacation.

A little while after the judge had gone he and Massey took the dog-cart and drove over to the town in which court was being held.

Their first visit, however, was to a jeweler's. The momentous task of buying a pretty little solitaire ring was at last disposed of.

"Now home?" queried Massey.

"Presently, after a little more business has been transacted," was the answer.

Alden took the reins and drove over to the jail.

"Come in with me," he said, and Massey followed, wondering what was about to happen.

"I want to see Calvin Durand," said Alden, to the warden.

"Will you see him in my private office?" asked the official.

"Yes, I would prefer to."

"Step in there, then, and I will have him sent to you."

"Judge Willoughby and I have talked the matter over," said Alden, in explanation. "And we have decided that, in the midst of our general happiness, it is hard that even one who has caused us much unhappiness should be shut off from the world. There is no doubt that this Durand can be convicted of abduction and could be shut up for a few years.

"But, fortunately, the evil effects of his doings have been removed, and, in our happiness, we are not deserving of it if we do not forgive those who have tried to wrong us. The upshot of it is that Judge Willoughby and myself have decided to offer Durand a chance for freedom."

"The idea is worthy of you," Massey said, heartily. "For one, I am so happy that I could forgive the whole world, if I had a grievance against it collectively. By all means, let this unhappy scoundrel go free, and let him have a chance to do right in the future, if he will."

"I felt sure that you would agree with us," said Alden. "We have said nothing to Sibyl about the matter, but I feel positive that even she would recommend this man to mercy, rather than condemn him to serve time in prison."

Further conversation in this strain was interrupted by the entrance of Calvin Durand, under guard of an officer.

He was pale and haggard, but he looked defiantly at his callers.

"I suppose, gentlemen, you come to see how prison life agrees with me," he said, coldly. "Are you satisfied with your inspection of me?"

"Durand," said Alden, more kindly than most men could have done, "I have a proposition to make to you, and if you accept it you will be a free man before the day is over."

"What kind of a proposition can you have to make to me?" Durand demanded, coldly. "Certainly not one looking to my advantage."

"Take a seat," suggested Alden. "I have something to tell you."

The prisoner gravely seated himself, and Alden went on:

"I make no question that you will be greatly surprised when I tell you that in Sibyl Willoughby I have found a daughter."

"Do you mean to tell me that you are her father?" he demanded.

"I am."

"Then that accounts, I imagine, for the extraordinary skill with which you handled her case in court."

Alden bowed, saying: "Thank you."

And then the lawyer added:

"And Doctor Massey will soon become her husband. We are all so happy that we do not care to persecute any living creature. If you will sign this paper, agreeing to prosecute no one for false imprisonment, I will guarantee that you shall be set free before the sun sets. I ask you to sign the paper because, otherwise, your release would enable you to turn around and institute suit."

"I will sign the paper," said Durand, coldly. But

the eagerness with which he seized the document showed that his coldness was assumed.

He signed the document with rapid strokes and shoved it across the table to Alden.

Two of the jail's officials were called in and signed as witnesses.

"You shall soon be at liberty," said Gerald Alden, pocketing the document.

The lawyer was as good as his word. In less than two hours afterward the charge of abduction against Calvin Durand had been legally dismissed, and the jailer received orders to set him at liberty.

It may be said, in passing, that Durand disappeared the same afternoon.

Madame Lise d'Armettre disappeared at the same time.

Nothing has since been heard of either of them, but it is probable that they have begun life over anew, and have taken the precaution of new names.

Though the annulment of her mock-marriage with Durand could not be considered matter for too openly expressed congratulation, Sibyl had many visitors that evening. Dozens of neighbors called, and to some of her more intimate friends Sibyl told the fact of her engagement to Will.

Kennison was among the callers. He led Will aside as soon as he arrived, and said:

"See here, Massey, old man, whether you've any chance with Sibyl, I don't know. I've realized for some time past that my chances in that direction can be written with a cipher. I don't know whether you know that the Darlingtons returned the day before yesterday. Fact, though. I saw Edie to-day. That

story of her engagement to somebody else wasn't so, and—and—the fact of it is that she and I have made up our differences, and we mean to be married before long. She's a splendid girl, and I'll try to make her happy."

"I'm glad you've found happiness," said Will, heartily. "So have I, and we shan't interfere with each other. Miss Willoughby has made me happy by accepting me."

"Congratulations, old man!" cried Kennison, cordially. "You're worthy of her—I'm not. Edie Darlington is a great deal too good for me, but she's consented to put up with me, and I'm not sorry I can tell you."

When the last of the callers had gone, Sibyl turned a happy face to her lover.

"Life seems to have been begun over again," she said. "And how happy everybody else appears, too."

"I am looking forward to a life filled with happiness," said Will, gazing fondly at her.

"May you both find happiness throughout your lives," cried the judge.

"Amen!" responded Gerald Alden, fervently.

THE END.

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